

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 11 May 2022 1:00:16 PM

Your details

Title Miss

First name Melanie

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Email

Postcode 2480

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 I bought my house at Union St South Lismore in 2005, and in this time I have experienced many floods the worst being Debbie in 2017 which came up to the underside of my floor boards....until now
We have never been better prepared for a flood as we were this time, everything was moved up into the house and the floor rugs were rolled up

and placed on top of tables and cupboards as a precautionary measure. We moved our cars to higher ground on Sunday afternoon (unfortunately not high enough). At this time the texts I was receiving from Lismore city council were predicting flood levels well well below my floor boards. As the night went on and the bad weather continued at about 11pm I decided to pack my pets and evacuate, I phoned a good friend from Girards hill and asked him to come get me because my car had been moved to higher ground. My friend rang me back about 11:30pm saying he couldn't get through and we would have to sit this one out. I tried to go to bed and get some rest but couldn't sleep so I listened to some meditation podcasts while my flatty/friend decided to construct a boot on one of the kayaks for the pets just in case things got grim. He kept checking in with me, reporting the water level to me at various intervals. I was pretty confident at this time from the predictions I was receiving that we would be ok. I don't know what time it was when the water entered my house. This was scary, we packed our emergency exit bags and brought the kayaks out to the front deck, we threw an extension cord across to our neighbour's house with floor boards at 13.6 and we started to exit, cat in cat box and dog in life jacket we carted ourselves and our animals to safety in our neighbour's much higher house. By the time I stepped into my kayak the water was above my knees, and rising fast. Once we got to safety at Union St we started phoning our neighbour on the other side knowing they were home and alone and their floor boards the same level as mine, as the water kept rising we tried to get to them in the kayak but the water was moving too fast for safety, the last contact we had, the water was at their neck level, then we lost contact and started phoning SES and police rescue to get a rescue for our neighbour. We got through and were told they would get there as soon as possible. As the hours passed and the water kept rising we

continued phoning SES and police on behalf of our neighbours, and always given the same response- they would get to them as soon as possible. (they never got there, but luckily some locals did). The water kept rising as we prepared once again for a possible emergency escape in the Kayaks but now we were 4 adults, 1 cat and 2 dogs. We tied the kayaks together thinking it would be more stable if we all needed to escape, we could tie a cord to the house and float on the kayaks if the water gets higher than their house too, but my neighbour can't swim so she couldn't bare the thought of being on a kayak if things got desperate, so we also prepared for them to get into the roof cavity if needed and tried to find something they could use to break through the tin if need be. The water kept rising, eventually the power went out, we had about an hour by torchlight when finally the water started entering my neighbours house as well. When dawn broke and it was still raining we tried to get the attention of choppers flying over head, waving white sheets and flashing our flash lights, the water kept rising. The furniture started to float about with our pets on top. My neighbours old dog howling in fear, sometimes my dog would join him, the fear in their faces too much to bear. Finally, when the water was about hip height our saviours arrived, some locals from molesworth street, who had left their own flooded house in their boat, and started rescuing others in need, tearing their boats through the tops of trees in our front yard trying to get to us. They made it through, there were already three passengers in the boat all wet, freezing, frightened and relieved, they helped us all into the boat. On our way to safety the boat hit something in the water and we almost tipped and we soon realised we were over loaded and possibly wouldn't make it across the waterway where the river actually flows, luckily before we got there an empty speed boat came along we hailed the driver down and two of our flood survivors, my friend and one of my neighbours jumped into the empty

speed boat and teared off into the distance (it was two very stress filled days before we heard from either of them again.)

Our boat journeyed across the river then on to dry land at the bottom of John Street Girards hill, ducking and weaving passed power lines and trying to avoid all the flood debris. Lucky for me where we landed is where one of my friends lives so they put me up and their neighbours put my neighbour up for the first two nights of our new shocking post flood existance.

Sadly, the people who rescued us and so many others like us, unfortunately lost their boat as the damage sustained was too great for it to be used again.

The peek of the flood in my house was 3 foot from my ceiling in the highest part of the house and 1.5 meters above my neighbours floor.

Needless to say, i lost everything, as did all my neighbours, and I found my car upside down on the railway platform.

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

bad luck? , bad weather? bad flood mitigations decisions? Man Made alterations to the landscape? climate change?who knows? possibly a combination of all this plus more

1.2 Preparation and planning

Weather and flood forecasts were inaccurate, this contributed greatly to the danger we all found ourselves in.
SES were too late with evacuation orders, and we had no means to remove ourselves by the time they called evacuation, perhaps if evacuation orders are given this late it might be useful for a bus to collect stranded citizens

1.3 Response to floods

Thanks to many locals with boats taking matters into their own hands I feel a lot of lives were saved.

1.4 Transition

This is all kind of blurry, there was a lot of

**from incident
response to
recovery**

assistance from volunteers and other locals, feeding and housing us. I am thankful that I did not have to stay at the evacuation centre because most people I know who ended up there caught covid there.

**1.5 Recovery from
floods**

the clean up still continues, initially we had a lot of help from volunteers cleaning up from the first flood, only to be struck again by the second flood that came 1 month later, there was no army of volunteers for the second flood, tired and exhausted from the first we began again on clean up after the second, on our own. Services provided by the community have been the greatest help, being able to lodge requests for specific assistance, having access to food and other essentials at Koori Mail and Wyralla Road has been amazing. The orange laundromat, resilience and food not bombs have all been fabulous.

**1.6 Any other
matters**

with regards to what I would like to see happen. It seems apparent that floods are getting higher and more dangerous every time. I would like to see all properties on flood land be given the opportunity to relocate and turn the area into parklands and recreational space, a land swap with financial assistance to move houses that survived or build new houses for those that didnt. Personally, I know that the bank will not extend my home loan because I applied in January to do this for renovations, and was refused (now thankfully) So if a land swap is an option I would also need financial assistance from the government - perhaps a low interest loan or something - to have my house physically moved out of harms way. I am fortunate that my house is old and mostly made of hard wood so faired relatively well in this disaster, however I do not feel safe staying there now, every time it rains I feel frightened and unsafe. I am staying with friends while i work on fixing the damage to my house.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [IMG_1094.JPG](#)
 - [IMG-0992_0.jpg](#)
 - [IMG_1279.JPG](#)
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