

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Sunday, 15 May 2022 2:20:36 PM

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## Your details

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**Title** Mr

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**First name** Michael

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**Last name** Hetharia

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**Email**

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**Postcode** 2470

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## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as** A member of the general public

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**Submission type** I am making a personal submission

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**Organisation making the submission (if applicable)** None

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**Your position in the organisation (if applicable)** None

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**Consent to make submission public** 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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## Your story

### North Coast Flood Related Issues

1. Why was ABC North Coast not broadcasting live emergency information to the region at the very time floodwaters were rising at unprecedented rates (night of 27/28 February). River FM 2NCR FM was transmitting information about rapidly rising waters while they were able, but many in the Lismore region didn't know this, and others can't access River FM. ABC North Coast was replaying a podcast of Indira Naidoo interviewing somebody about COVID 19 when they should have been broadcasting this emergency situation "live". ABC Radio should be the "go to" media source when civil emergencies are unfolding (especially as they can broadcast in AM/FM and Digital).

2. In addition to ABC being the emergency broadcast facility, given that many/most people watch TV rather than listen to radio at night, regional TV stations should be alerted and directed to announce disaster alerts, and advise locals to listen to Radio ABC North Coast for emergency updates.

3. Why is the critical piece of NBN infrastructure that failed located in Woodburn, a location famous for being inundated in serious floods? It's absurd that our main communication network was non-functional for days on end during the floods because it was located in a vulnerable location, and inaccessible for emergency repairs and or fuel for their generator leaving both phones and internet for days on end. If Australia's communication network is this vulnerable in times of peace, how would we cope in the event of conflict or sabotage?

4. Why are the offices and depots of our emergency services located in flood prone locations? All emergency sites should be located and built to survive all manageable contingencies.

5. Authorities on radio (ABC North Coast) were repeatedly telling us to get information about communication outages, weather conditions, roads open and closed, and other services on

the internet. Giving such advice without giving non digital alternatives is not an acceptable option when we have no internet access.

6. SMS advice given by Telstra about communication availability keeps referring people to the Telstra App for more information. The Telstra App wasn't accessible on our phones at the time these messages were sent.

7. Throughout the flooding, we were continually warned on national media about possible thunderstorms and the possibility of damaging hail and more flooding, but once communications went down, we had no weather app/radar or information pertinent to our specific towns/geographic locations, as distinct from the media calls referring to "East Coast" or SE Qld/Northern NSW weather.

8. NBN advised on March 4th that internet services would be restored at 03:01hrs on March 5th. Over two days later, it still hadn't happened.

9. Telstra advised customers by text message on March 5th that our Smart Modems will have diverted to backup systems on 4G and 5G. Many residents still only get 3G at best and regardless of whether they had 3G, 4G or 5G, could not access the internet on PC's using this backup service. Additionally, we couldn't access the internet on our up to date smartphones.

10. Telco's and NBN must be held accountable to provide accurate, timely advice to customers about what is happening. Individuals effectively have no means (or chance) of contacting Telcos's and or NBN directly themselves. Even a week after the peak of the Lismore flood, the information provided by the NBN and Telco's was nothing more than generic garble.

11. Throughout the floods, NSW My Roads, Live Traffic and Local Council information about road conditions/closures was hopelessly out of date. It is useless posting information without a timestamp as it is frequently very dated. ABC North Coast radio eventually provided updated info, but even their 'feeds' from the live traffic bureau, referred the public to seek further

information on the Internet which was still unavailable to large numbers (and often the most seriously affected) in the area.

12. It seems that automatic river level gauges used for predicting flood levels were once again not working in some critical locations (Kyogle). Why aren't there backup systems (or people) in place to monitor critical information like this?

13. During the last floods, the people who closely monitored the weather and regional rainfall data available from the Bureau of Meteorology, as well as the information be posted throughout the rainfall period on local Facebook pages, clearly saw that very serious flooding was imminent. The monitoring of similar available data at other recent flood events also accurately predicted the floods that followed. This makes it clear that locals must be allowed far more input into managing Emergency Services responsibilities at times natural disasters threaten our communities. Relying entirely on BOM data does not work.

Civil defence strategies should be in place for all probable contingencies including Flood, Fire, Cyclone, Tsunami, Pandemic, Civil Unrest and War.

Mike Hetharia

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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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### **Supporting documents or images**

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