

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 19 May 2022 3:02:47 PM

Your details

Title Miss

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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 would consider our family quite lucky as opposed to most in the events that transpired in Lismore on the 27th and 28th February 2022. However, I believe even our story has some prudent points to be made.

We started to pay attention to the possibility of flooding on the afternoon of Sunday 27th

February, due to the large quantity of rain not only in the Lismore township but also in the surrounding areas that would flow into the Wilson's River catchment.

There were no real public notifications made throughout the day other than sand had been dumped in 3 locations around Lismore, if you happened to have your own bags and shovel. Emergency services were already stretched before the disaster began. We had neither available to us, but it would not have mattered, as due to the torrential rain, the sand that had been dumped for the public to utilise had washed away within 2 hours.

The only source of notification as to the coming events was logging into the Lismore SES Facebook page to check for updates, if they posted, every hour or so and via monitoring the Wilson River height level ourselves on the BOM website. The elderly and those that do not have internet did not have access to even this amount of information.

At 5pm on the 26th February it was still being predicted it would only be moderate flooding, which would not effect us at South Lismore so we remained in place. We did continue to monitor the situation on the computer.

At around 7pm on the 27th, it became very clear on the BOM graph that the Wilson's River was rising much faster than was being reported and it was obvious the levee wall would breach. It was then that we made the decision to start packing ourselves in preparation for possible departure, not because of predicted flood levels, or the possibility of water entering our home, but simply because we knew power would be temporarily disconnected, which would make it difficult with a then 10 month old.

At approximately 7.30pm we received a text

message from friends offering us accommodation for the night, which we accepted and arranged to head to their residence at 10.00pm of the 27th of February.

At approximately 8.00pm on the 27th February I received a text SMS message from the SES advising of an evacuation warning for our area and to prepare to leave as an evacuation order was expected on Monday the 28th February. No times were given for when this order was expected, however at this stage it was being predicted by the SES on their Facebook page that the levee wall would breach at 6.00am.

Perhaps the most important point of our experience was at 9.00pm on the 27th February, 2022 an SES volunteer knocked on our door and given that friends passed away in this flood I will never forget her words (this quote can go on the official record):

SES volunteer: "Hi Guys, I am here to let you know that this is not an evacuation order, but we are knocking on doors to see what people's intentions are, whether you are going or leaving, to save us time in the morning".

Me: "We are leaving, the car is packed and we have arranged to stay with friends tonight and will be heading off in an hour or so".

SES worker:" Well if you are planning on leaving I would go now, we are walking around in knee deep water in some places and roads are closing fast".

She then continued on to outline where the evacuation centre was being set up.

Approximately 15 minutes later we left our address in South Lismore following the "Last Roads Out" route outlined on signs by Council. The level of water I had to drive through at that

stage was bordering on dangerous and I can confidently state that any person leaving South Lismore and longer than half an hour behind us had no hope of getting out by car.

Due to the lack of warning and complacency to the situation unfolding, all our neighbours stayed and had to be rescued by civilians in boats in the early hours of the morning of Monday 28th February, 2022.

No evacuation order was ever received.

The primary questions I have for the inquiry are:

1) When the SES were door knocking at 9.00pm on Sunday 27th February, 2022 and they knew at that time that if people did not leave immediately they would be unable to get out, why was this not the official evacuation order?

2) If a regular person could look at the Wilson River height graph on the BOM website at approximately 7.00pm on the 27th of February, 2022 and see that the levee wall would be breached a long time before 6.00am on the 28th February, 2022, how is it that no official service could see this and advise the public accordingly?

3) Why is it that the only information and warnings that could be found had to be searched for on the internet by an individual? This fact alone left many people uninformed and disadvantaged in regards to preparation and evacuation.

Our story still has not finished almost 3 months on, in fact our nightmare had only just began. But the aftermath is perhaps the forum for a different inquiry.

Thankyou for your time in reading this submission.

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#)

1.2 Preparation and planning

In my opinion, as stated in my submission, there was very little done in regards to preparation and planning. Refer to paragraphs 3,4 and the conversation with an SES volunteer in paragraph 9.

1.5 Recovery from floods

It was very disheartening and continues to this day, where in Lismore, all key resources are prioritised towards the CBD, businesses and local council. Including when the Defence Forces were seconded to Lismore, they were tasked by Council.

Individuals and residents have had to and continue to clean up and rebuild everything themselves. Other than kerbside collection of flood waste twice, which was ceased with 24 hours notice, we have not received any assistance whatsoever.

Supporting documents or images
