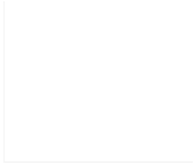


**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Tuesday, 17 May 2022 12:17:33 AM



## Your details

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<b>Title</b>	Mrs
<b>First name</b>	Kirsty
<b>Last name</b>	Pamplin
<b>Email</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Postcode</b>	2480

## Submission details

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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	Other
<b>Submission type</b>	I am submitting on behalf of my organisation
<b>Organisation making the submission (if applicable)</b>	Nimbin Health & Welfare Association
<b>Your position in the organisation (if applicable)</b>	Admin Support
<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	I give my consent for this submission to be made public

## Share your experience or tell your story

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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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### 1.2 Preparation and planning

Our local communities are a wealth of knowledge, with many members of our community having been through many a flood “old timers” with first-hand knowledge having spoken of how the water behaves and moves amongst the community. Many of them have expressed that “once the water hits Goolmangar then Lismore is to expect this water 4 hour later and twice as high”

It became apparent with the information and warnings that were issued from the SES and the BOM that the information was not “local” with many local members expressing concerns that evacuation warnings should have been issued sooner and not retracted while the water rose. It was felt that the SES was relying on Sydney information (so not on the ground) and this information was compromised due to faulty depth readings and information coming from other sources instead of locally

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### 1.3 Response to floods

Communities need access to communication networks before during and after an emergency event such as a flood. We had people on the ground attempting to contact members of the community and conduct welfare checks but they were unable to get in contact with people. We had emergency services trying to access places not knowing what they were going to find as there were no communications

We need a local branch of the SES, people who live and work in the area need to be the ones making the decisions and not people based in Sydney who are relying on second hand information. It is great to have an offsite component if the local team needs to be evacuated but it needs to be the local team who

make the big calls on the situation.

There needs to be money invested in communication infrastructure – it has become apparent that one single exchange being taken out wipes out an entire town with no contingency in place thus rendering the community at risk. As a regional town It would be good to invest some more money into training the community to respond to events like this so that Nimbin can help to look after its own community when resources are stretched thin.

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#### **1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery**

Due to communications being down there was a major issue with our recovery phase, how do we help when there is no way to contact our emergency services, our RFS, the SES, the people on the ground who are there to help. People were not able to call 000 to be rescued Imagine this - you were doing the right thing - prepping for the flood by packing your car and getting yourself ready to evacuate when you slip and fall, you grab for your phone and call 000, well this time no one answers, it flashes no service – not even the SOS signal shows on your phone, you try again, cold hard water smashing into you while the pain in your broken leg radiates, you try again but still nothing. So you crawl inside and scream hoping someone hears. 3 days later your neighbour finally hears you and comes to give you some assistance. This is just one of the nightmares that was reality for Nimbin.

There were stories of people being told by the SES to get into their roof space, the SES then lost communications and were not contactable, people were trying to call but the system (if they could get a call out) could not handle the influx of calls and this meant that people were basically sitting ducks, in the dark roof, waiting for help that was not coming for them and then no way of contacting anyone.

There was a huge lack of coordinated response, we all independently did what we could to help as there was no way to coordinate all of the available resources. During previous natural

disasters we were able to communicate with teams on the ground and be there to face the event as a community – this time we felt that we were on our own.

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### **1.5 Recovery from floods**

The community has been working together to help everyone to recover from this event, this is a mammoth effort and many people are feeling like they have been forgotten as a large part of Nimbin was not directly affected by the flood water but was land slip effected. A lot of the funding was directed at flood water only. This has been a difficult time for the community and we have been thankful for the help that has been received already but we do need access to more assistance at a grass roots level with access to local communities and people who know the area.

We need back up communications – there was talk of many of the local residents getting together and accessing CB radios so that parts of the community were able to keep in contact even if roads were flooded and normal comms were down.

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### **1.6 Any other matters**

One of the huge issues we faced was access to communications, many of the local community were left for 5 days up to six weeks with no access to reliable communications, this was scary for many people but especially for our elder and more vulnerable community members whom we support.

As an organisation NHWA attempted to contact every person on our books with limited success, we then sent staff out over roads that were compromised (without communications) to try and gain access to our members who needed support, many of these people rely on us not only for daily support but also food via meals on wheels. Imagine being 78 years old, on your own with limited mobility and not knowing if anyone was coming to bring you anything to eat. Many of our members were basically isolated with no form of contact for a number of days, once we were able to regain communications it was a

mad rush to call every person for a welfare check to let them know that they were not alone and that we were trying to get to them.

A huge issue with the lack of stable communications was the people within our community who use the life alert button - with no phones these didn't work, so they were vulnerable at risk people who were left unable to contact emergency services if they had a fall or needed assistance. This was a very scary time for many of our community but especially those who rely on others for support.

After the event many of our shops and local food outlets were unable to offer EFTPOS sales limiting to just cash, the ATM ran out of cash and it became difficult for some families to be able to purchase goods to feed themselves.

The fact that we had no communications as a community and could not call emergency services was a huge issue and is something that needs to be addressed at a higher level.

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### **Supporting documents or images**

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