

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Wednesday, 18 May 2022 11:41:30 PM

Your details

Title Mr

First name Patrick

Last name TATAM

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

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**

I live at Whian Whian Road, Whian Whian 2480, on a seven acre property approximately 30 kilometres north of Lismore. Importantly, my property is bordered by Branch Creek on three sides, and has four major tributaries joining the main creek at or within 20 metres of my property. Flowing from here into Terania Creek, thence Leycester Creek, Branch Creek is a major component of the catchment area for Leycester Creek: the other major water source into Lismore is Wilson River.

Since 13 December 2021, I have had a formal relationship with the State Emergency Service (SES) in Lismore in my capacity as a member of the "Floodwatcher Network in the Leycester Creek-Wilsons River catchment", confirmed by way of a letter of the above date signed by Ed Bennett of the "Flood Intelligence Team at Lismore SES". Ed is my contact, via his mobile number: [redacted] in the event of my bottom paddock flooding by way of Branch Creek breaking its banks at the bottom, western end of my property. This indicator "protocol" was clarified and confirmed between myself and Ed Bennett as a result of the 2017 (Cyclone Debbie) flood, following my phone calls to the local ABC radio station at the time, warning Lismore residents that the levee would overflow given that my bottom paddock was under more than 300mm of fast moving flood water. In that flood, I recorded 710mm having fallen here in exactly 24 hours. I have faithfully recorded rainfall here for the last six years, and have retained all my records. Ed Bennett was quite clear that should another event occur, I would ring him if and when the paddock was similarly flooded.

The events here leading up to the 2022 flood were as follows:

Thu. 24 Feb: my daughter Emma rang from Tasmania to advise that more than 500mm rainfall would hit here on Sunday: she sourced this from Higgins Storm Watchers (?).

Thu. 24 to 8am Sun 27 Feb: a total of 350mm of rain fell here. This rain ensured that the ground was fully saturated and the creek ways were fully charged. (Note: over the five days preceding the 2017 flood, virtually no rainfall was recorded, although the ground was still very wet from previous rains). Furthermore, on one day in this period, I heard a B.O.M. representative commenting on ABC radio about the exceptional height of the rain cloud bearing down upon us from Queensland, and the enormous volume of water that would be contained in such a cloud mass. The rainfall predictions at this time were at first from 40-80mm per day, and then in the last

couple of days, increased to "+100mm" per day. I was not aware of any other warnings.

8am Sun 27 Feb to 8am Mon 28 Feb: 861mm of rainfall was recorded

Sun 27 Feb: approx 4-5pm: rang Ed Bennett to advise of heavy rain of about 15mm per hour, and to confirm that I would call if the bottom paddock "went under": he understood what I was saying.

6pm: rain now intensifying markedly, and Internet (satellite service) failed. Mobile signal was becoming markedly intermittent, in spite of recently installed \$1,500 Telstra "booster" aerial.

6.43pm: I rang Ed Bennett to advise bottom paddock now partially under water, and rainfall now at about 40mm per hour.

7.03pm: rang Ed Bennett to advise paddock almost fully under, and that the Lismore levee would be breached. He seemed to be a little distracted by events happening in his immediate area, and I wasn't sure that he was "taking in" what I was saying.

7.40 & 7.43 pm: mobile signal now very patchy, and could not connect with Ed Bennett. I contacted the local ABC Radio, advising them and their "on air" audience that the bottom paddock was now "in full and wild flood", and that the rain was continuing to greatly intensify. I further requested them to pass this exact information on to Ed Bennett, and found out later that they had so done.

10pm to Mon. 28 Feb: 5am: Rain intensity re-doubled to average 60-75mm per hour. I was unable to make contact with anyone, as land-line (out for preceding week), internet, mobile were all out of action. At 4.30 am, power went out, and was not available for the next six days.

8am: total rainfall reading for 24 hours was 861mm. In the next 24 hour period, a further 304mm was recorded.

Approx 8.30am, Thu 3 Mar: most of the above data was recorded in an interview with local ABC Radio announcer, Jo Shoebridge.

Approx 12 noon to 4pm, Mon. 4 Apr: again, most of the above data was recorded by a 60 Minutes' team, and ultimately shown in their "on-line" segment called "Extra Minutes" a couple of weeks later.

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My submission is to make the point that I had done as much as I could to ensure that SES would receive early and reliable warning from me of a flood threat to downstream Lismore in good time so as to alert residents so that they had sufficient time to evacuate themselves. This strategy appears to have failed completely. I have had no contact from SES since the flood phone calls.

Furthermore, B.O.M. appear to have completely misread the weather event that was approaching Northern Rivers.

Finally, Jo Shoebridge of local ABC Radio (who had taken the time just after the 2017 flood to visit my property so that she would understand what I was saying in the event of my having to ring them in the future with flood information), was not on duty when I made those desperate calls late on the Sunday night, and so the import of what I was saying was somewhat diluted. The SES had made no attempt to visit or analyse the property in the years subsequent to 2017, in spite of my invitations for them to so do.

My suggestions are as follows:

- * B.O.M. have to provide more comprehensive and accurate forecasting information.

- * SES , if they wish to set up a workable "Floodwatcher Network", are going to have to visit and appraise every "floodwatcher" property, issue each owner a standard rain gauge with at least 1000mm capacity, and to set up a "trigger" level, as in a permanent creek water level gauge, colour-coded with say three points that can be picked out with binoculars, with instructions to ring a dedicated SES phone number as each "trigger" level is breached, and further instructions to call in rain gauge readings at two hour intervals following the first breach.

- * "Floodwatchers" being able to use the S.O.S. function on their mobile to make contact with SES, given that usually, internet,

mobile, land line and power networks will be out of action.

* "Floodwatchers" being given contact information for their neighbouring "floodwatchers", to facilitate information flows and comparative analysis.

I can be contacted on mobile , or e-mail:

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2480

Supporting documents or images
