

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Monday, 11 April 2022 2:55:25 AM

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## Your details

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**Title** Mr

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**First name** Pete

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**Last name** Blay

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**Email**

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**Postcode** 4887

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## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as** Other

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

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**Organisation making the submission (if applicable)** Volunteering

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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** I am a volunteer from far North Queensland that has been here for 5 weeks - since the first major flood. I posted the following on the Resilient

Lismore page, and was asked to submit it to your enquiry.

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\*language warning, no apologies\*

This is not our story.

We thank you all for the words of encouragement and support, but I am not comfortable when we are addressed as legends or hero's. We are just here because we want to be, because the support from the government has fallen short - and because if this s t happened to us, we would hope there was enough humanity left in the world, that someone would care enough to be there.

It's been 20 years since I lived in this area. As we drive around I've passed my old school, the uni where I did my degree, houses I rented, homes of friends. Memories fond, some forgotten, and perhaps a couple that I wish I could forget. But I still love this place, and it f g breaks my heart to see it like this.

I have lived through Lismore floods in the past. We used to look at the 1974 flood markers on the telegraph poles, and wonder how the f k that was even possible. Some of the markers in South Lismore were near the top of the poles, and it always felt more like fiction than fact. This flood was over 2 metres higher than that, and the place we fondly referred to as the bowl, became exactly that.

We have been here for 5 weeks now. I have lost count of the number of people we have assisted, yet every one of their stories has left an imprint. When times are tough we fall back on our coping mechanisms - some more healthy than others. I completely detached - I put the whole scenario in a box and threw away the key, and got on with it,

as I did when my Dad passed when I was young. 14,000 displaced people in this area are finding their own way to process, as I write this.

And then yesterday, it all caught up. You can only see so much despair and destruction, without breaking. You cannot empathise without feeling it, to hear people out, and to try and give some hope that somebody gives a k. That there are better times ahead.

Yesterday we did two jobs in South Lismore. The first home is owned by a woman with muscular dystrophy. She sat in her wheelchair as the flood waters rose, lucky enough that someone arrived to help. Her daughter, who's home also went completely under, has been trying her best to clean up the place, while her mother is treated in hospital - wondering if her Mums home will be deemed structurally unsound by an engineer, and whether or not she will have to put her Mum in a nursing home for the remainder of her days. The daughter has been there, pressure cleaning the debris from the ceiling of a two story home, in between trying to sort out her own home, which is only 2 blocks away, and received a similar fate. And still has the strength for a joke and a smile, beaming with thanks for our efforts to help, rather than give in to it all. Because if you don't laugh, you'll cry.

The second home we did was the home of an artist, a gentle soul that loves her home, and her cat. She told me over the phone after that they are the only things left that mean anything to her. Her home is two doors down from Boral petroleum plant, which was closed after the 2017 flood. As the flood waters rose, and literally came as a wave down the street, the holding tanks of tar and oil on the site dislodged, emptying the contents, and the currents delivered a river of shit to her doorstep. The layer of thick, black toxic ooze that still covers her walls has left the place looking like a derelict

house in a video game. I attempted to scratch some off with my nail, thinking it was oil, and it wouldn't budge. It's tar, and it has permeated every room and wall cavity, up to a couple of feet from the ceiling of a two story home. The entire back yard has been deemed toxic, the first foot of soil will need to be removed and replaced. She has been given 12 weeks accommodation, while Boral try their best to shirk responsibility, and do as little as they can. In the last few days, her cat has taken a bait there, and is in the vet. Her little companion doesn't look like he will make it.

Then times these stories by 14,000. Then tell them that the most the government can do is a maximum of \$20k each to rebuild their lives. Tell them, don't worry, the f---ing government will only take 3 weeks to declare the area a disaster area. Tell them there are payments available, but they will need to provide more info than you need to start a bank account, that has all just been washed away with the last of their f---ing hope.

I'm f---ing angry. And last night, I cried. Our donation money to keep us on the road will only go so far, and I just don't know how the f--- I am meant to just walk away from this - to head back north and enjoy my home, high and dry, with food on my table.

I hope that if you have got this far, that maybe you could share this post with your networks. Ask them to donate to the Lismore City Council flood appeal, or to the GIVIT flood appeal, that is raising money for the greater region. Ask them to vote these incompetent f---s out at the next election, in the hope that the next muppets implement a comprehensive disaster strategy, so that next time the response will not be solely in the hands of the community. And hopefully as the story slowly disappears from the media circus, the survivors here will not be forgotten.

## **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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