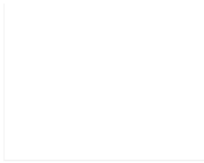


From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Saturday, 23 April 2022 12:30:54 PM



Your details

Title	Mr
First name	Philip
Last name	Benfield
Email	
Postcode	2480

Submission details

I am making this submission as	Emergency services personnel
Submission type	I am making a personal submission
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Ex Emergency service member of NSWFP, SES, VRA, Fire and Rescue
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	ex Member
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 am a subject matter expert in Swiftwater Rescue and general Rescue. I have resigned from all agencies after 20 years Police / Police Rescue, 20 Years NSW SES, 14 Years NSW VRA, 4 years NSW Fire and Rescue Retained. I have 30+ years involved in Swiftwater Rescue and have been a trainer and assessor for Swiftwater Rescue providing training to all agencies in the past. I was involved in the community response in my own boat during every day of both the 2022 major 14m flood in Lismore and performed over 100 person recoveries from the Lismore area.

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 have no input in this area.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Areas the inquiry need to look into by obtaining records from agencies:

1. How many current flood boats were available in Lismore from SES.
2. How many qualified operators (Swiftwater Rescue Technicians (In water Rescue) were in Lismore
3. How many qualified operators (Swiftwater Rescue Technicians (In water Rescue) are current in NSW SES at the time of the 2022 flood.
4. Look into how many of those In water Technicians were current. eg When was their last refresher. and how many of those were current with the fit for task. (Fit for task if where th member must complete a swim test, throw bag test, fitness test.
5. If you obtain records from SES about the currency re refreshers, and fit for task make strong inquiries if these figures were tampered with by seeking direct info from the member who they claim here current. Seek information what is

required to maintain currency from the policy. and seek information of evidence of what each member did to complete currency. Certificates will be issues by Penrith White Water Stadium.

6. Seek what training is completed outside of man made swiftwater venues. Most members do not get to experience any natural rivers of grater grade than grade 1 or 2. Most floods are Grade 3 to 5.

7. As with most agencies the training is not delivered by actual subject matter experts as how agencies work is once someone gets into a high position they seem to take over the training. If you were to go become a doctor for example. They go to experts for training. Imagine if you went to become a Doctor but you only received training from other non experts qualified people. Then that fresh trained person gets trained by that student, then the next student gets trained by that student. The concentration of skills and knowledge becomes less and less. But this is how agencies work. Anyone with skills gets pushed out by people who wants to get a name for them selves.

8. The current flood boat training done by NSW SES is completed on generally flat water only and no real exposure to floods is ever done. Then the volunteers are meant to get into a boat they have not been in for 2 or 3 years and go rescue in grade 4 to 5 flood rivers. The experience is not there.

9. Seek information from very skilled ex members of ses who have been pushed out and quit. Obtain a targeted exit reason from them. You will gain most of your answers from them about what is happening and why.

10. I was on the swiftwater Rescue and flood committee for SES and now exited this. Obtain the facebook group messages and you will see whey the training and skills are not good within SES. 11. Speak to Richard Delaney (<https://www.facebook.com/richard.delaney.7>) a subject matter expert in Vertical rescue. He recently left SES and will be able to inform you of

the systematic issues with NSW SES.

12. NSW Lismore Police Rescue do not have all of their members trained and qualified in Swiftwater rescue. Were any members on water not qualified. Why do Lismore Police Rescue not have any qualified boat operators or even a flood boat to use. Why was this boat previously owned by NSW Lismore Police Rescue removed from service.

13. Flood areas which will have boat access around towns need to have better navigation of streets. During this flood we were impacted by power-lines crossing our frequent used roads. Eg Ballina Road was the main access to and from the pickup and drop off. Power lines on these roads most frequent used should be higher or moved underground. Safe movement points should be used for example having very tall coloured posts where boat operators know where their boats will not hit obstacles. A section of the Levy wall also needs a way of opening once the water have leveled out over the levy wall. Boat were hitting the level wall to get from one side to the other.

1.3 Response to floods

1. Other agencies and public blocked by NSW SES - Find out what offered for assistance were offered to NSW SES (eg NSW VRA) as NSW VRA have swiftwater Rescue Technicians but were not taken up from by NSW SES. What other agencies were offering assistance.
2. How many Swiftwater Technicians and flood boat operators were on the ground prior to the first flood. We need more qualified people on the ground in preparation to any flood no matter what.
3. As a volunteer community response which will occur again as public always want to help we had no communications between public volunteers and agency. Better communications need to be had.
4. When being asked to attend an address by SES we spent a lot of time boating 1 hour away

only to find out they did not need help any more. SES were not following up on jobs which had been outstanding for 24 + hours.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

1. Why was the air space blocked by someone to prevent private helicopters etc from using the airspace. The community had donated foods and medical which was being deployed privately but airspace was blocked shutting down this area.

1.6 Any other matters

PLEASE ask any specific questions of me if you need as I do have lot more to say and can assist in real information while not being pressured from agency above.

I am not providing external training for volunteers to be safer in floods by training then in swiftwater Rescue and Flood boat skills.

Please see my facebook page under "Tully Benfield" to see images and video of flood rescues etc and what I am doing re training community in floods locally.

Supporting documents or images
