

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Monday, 4 April 2022 10:41:41 PM

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## Your details

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<b>Title</b>	Ms
<b>First name</b>	Rahima
<b>Last name</b>	Jackson
<b>Email</b>	<input type="text"/>

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## Submission details

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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	A resident in a flood-affected area
<b>Submission type</b>	I am making a personal submission
<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	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 knew it was going to flood, buying a home in South Lismore last Feburary. But I was above the 74 level and I was prepared to deal with being cut off and re-doing my garden every couple of years.

Leading up to the 28th it seemed like the time had come for me to learn first hand what it was all about. I bought supplies, moved anything I wasn't prepared to lose up and moved my car over to the high ground. I was concerned that my fruit trees might not of been in the ground long enough to handle the submersion. I was in contact with family and friends in the hills to try and give myself an idea of what was heading for us, through Sunday this seemed like a lot of rain; similar to Debbie. I brought my rabbits into the house, turned off my hot water service and settled in for a couple of days stuck at home.

Through the evening the 10.5m prediction was updated to 11.5m potential peak and I made the decision to stay, what was the point leaving for a typical major flood when this was going to be an ongoing part of my life living in the flood plain? I tried my best to go to sleep, at this point levy was expected to go over around 5-6am with the flood peak around midday.

Luckily for me this was futile and I was still obsessively checking the BOM when the 1am update came through at a new predicted peak of 13.5m, which would see water well inside my home. With no car it was definitely to late for me to safely evacuate, I grabbed a tape measure to gauge the level it may hit and began frantically raising everything as high as possible above it. I got my ladder from downstairs and prepared a space on top of my wardrobe, with food, water, a torch and battery banks. At around 2am the water started to rise, and it didn't stop.

It was in my house and up to my calves in around an hour. I sat on top of my wardrobe with my 2 cats and 2 rabbits in disbelief. I stayed on the wardrobe for at least an hour, listening to abc radio and looking at updates on facebook. It was already becoming difficult for people to even get through to the SES, let along get rescued. Friends from the high ground rang me in the early hours of the morning and told me it had

been updated again, 14.5m potential peak. They urged me to get on the roof in case it went higher again. The water was thigh height by then, I tried to tell them I didn't think it was safe to climb onto my roof until dawn but they persisted and I compromised to at least have a look. Wading to my front door I decided there was in fact enough light to 'safely' attempt a climb onto the roof, I returned to the wardrobe and collected the cat carrier containing the 2 rabbits and pushed them up onto the roof. Then I put each cat onto the roof, then I retrieved the ladder and got up myself.

It was still raining and freezing on the roof, I was in my PJ's with no shoes. My neighbours across the road flashed their torch at me and I flashed back. We watched a few helicopters fly over, after an attempt to make myself known to them I settled in for what I expected to be the long haul and tried to shelter myself under the roof awning for some protection from the rain. After a little while I realised if I were to be rescued there would be no time for cat catching, so I caught each of my cats and put them into the carrier with my rabbits (they do luckily get along).

It was shortly after this that I remember smelling smoke, I thought it was a little unusual but irrelevant. After a few more minutes it became obvious the smoke was actually coming from my roof, it was bellowing out of every roof seam. I called 000, once put through to the fire department they asked me if I could tell where the smoke was coming from and whether it was white or black. I told them it was white, and they told me to try not to breathe it in. I assumed rescue would arrive, it seemed a fairly time sensitive situation. We watched as 2 helicopters flew over, I was still quite calm but standing on the roof now; trying to make myself visible. This is when I noticed next door to my house in the glass fabrication workshop, somebody was gesturing at me from the top story window. He

appeared very concerned about my predicament, I tried to tell him I had called 000 and help was coming but he disappeared and I saw him shortly after climbing over to a boat tied inside the sheds loading bay. The boat wouldn't start, and kept getting caught on the fencing. I remember thinking I wasn't cold anymore, the tin was becoming quite warm beneath me. Luckily my rescuer Troy arrived before panic took over, I was fortunate in the moment to be quite calm about it all, as crazy as that sounds.

Troy deposited me and my entourage into his workshop and promptly left again to rescue my neighbours, and then to continue rescuing throughout the day. When I got to the upstairs level I was covered in oil from the water, I turned to the window and watched as the flames appeared through my bedroom window and began to descend from the ceiling slowly engulfing my home. I was able to ring my mum to tell her I was safe and also the friends who had prompted me to get on the roof, then my phone gave up. The fire burned all day, Troy brought about 10 people to his shed before beginning to take them to the bridge instead. We could hear yelling coming from the other houses, and people with working phones could see SOS messages from friends, family and neighbours, there were not many boats at first but any we saw we hailed and sent towards people in need. Around midday we began to notice how quickly the water was rising the steps into the attic we had sought refuge in, we estimated it would reach us within the hour and decided that it may be time to try and get out ourselves. While figuring out how to do 2 boat trips with Troy we were able to hail another boat and all leave the workshop at the same time 10 people, 3 cats, 2 rabbits and a large dog. Our convoy bypassed the bridge, it was underwater as well. We went straight across the river and down Ballina rd, ducking under power lines and weaving by other boats, more and more boats as we reached the

CBD side of the river.. I remember all I could think of the entire trip was that when this was over, and Lismore had recovered, our community needed to find a way to adequately thank these rescuers on tinnies. We all stumbled from the boats past the Ballina rd traffic lights thanking our rescuers profusely. Our little flood family managed some heartfelt words to each other and then we all stumbled on our way.

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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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### 1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Delayed warning for extent of flood event, potential peak updates were coming in with sentences such as 'incomprehensible amount of water'

Potential flood peaks seemed to be calculated off an estimate based on rain event ending with no further rain to enter catchments.

Obvious gap in data from areas of the catchment, possibly need to look at more rain gauges or community liaison for rain data.

Emergency service lines I'll equipped to handle influx of calls.

Emergency services lacking resources to respond to calls.

Emergency services not giving appropriate advise. It was indicated to me to wait for rescue from my burning roof, a very time sensitive situation. No help came, it would of been appropriate to indicate that was a possibility as encourage me to spend time locating a flotation device.

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### 1.3 Response to floods

Ses needs more boats, potentially could run community liaison program to have community

boat fleet taskforce. Trained by Ses with incentives such as CB radios, life jackets, discount on license etc

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**1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery**

Once out of the water I walked to my friends house, it may of been a good idea for someone to be gathering names of safe persons at the drop off area. For people who went straight to friends and family not to evacuation centre.

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**1.5 Recovery from floods**

Among other issues such as mental health and accomadation our most pressing need is prompt guidance from government and council about optimum strategies for rebuild and recovery. Current building guidelines need to be re-assessed as soon as possible so that current regulations on building height will be shifted to take into consideration this event. There should be recommended structures, building materials and utility connections which take into consideration this event and the possibility of future similar events. If homes and businesses are to remain on the flood plain they need to be built or upgraded to survive water inundation. This could be encouraged through incentives such as open source plans, simple permits and subsidies. If government and council are not willing to take these steps to prepare out homes and businesses then a buy back scheme has to be undertaken and affected towns need to be moved out of the flood plain.

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**1.6 Any other matters**

If a buy back scheme is an option land in appropriate areas for development on plateau and in goonellabah should be re-zoned as residential.

Cbd could be left as heritage shop faciades with relocatable stores (e.g. shipping container shops)

Shops and other ground level buildings should have powerpoints and electrical work installed high set on the walls to reduce risk of inundation.

Building wall cavatites should be made waterproof e.g. waterproof skirting tiles

Lismore should host a competition/callout for engineers and architects to design flood proof structures to be built here. Lismore could become a revolutionary city showcasing innovative designs and structures that can future proof our town and can be an example to others. Innovative problem solving through design, construction and engineering needs to be encouraged and fast tracked, not bogged down in red tape by council guidelines. Either Lismore evolves or me die, it is not sustainable to continue the way we are. Rebuild needs to get smarter, not just more stubborn.

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### **Supporting documents or images**

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