

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 24 June 2022 8:46:05 PM

Your details

Title Ms

First name Sarah

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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

Your story Feburary 28th 2022 Flood Main Arm NSW

Saturday Feb 26th; I was due to fly out to work via the Gold Coast airport, however the road at Sherry's bridge was flooded so I was not able to travel.

On the Sunday 27th we tried again but the road had stayed flooded and had worsened in degree.

I had to cancel my six-week work contract Overnight Sunday to Monday 28th Feb the water continued to rise in the Main Arm valley. I awoke early hours of Monday to a huge volume of water rushing past in the creek adjacent to my house. Water gushing down the road and the drains and culverts overflowing and rushing under my house. The water had gauged it way damaging everything in its path.

Trees had fallen in and across the creek, large boulders had moved down the creek, the water was at heights not seen in my time of living here of 30years,

I was very worried about the stability of the land next to the creek and worried my house would be moved in a land slide. I spent ten hours that Monday, clearing way for the water, moving items to high ground with a continual eye on the creek bank. I was by myself with no phone or internet.

Rocks and boulders had been moved with great force and blocked the road next to my house. Three very large and old trees had been pushed over by the force of the water and moved down the creek.

The water continued at a very high level for the remainder of that day. I was locked in without communication of any kind at my house.

I was able to walk a steep km up the hill in the valley and send a message to my son at 11am it was shortly after that all communications went down.

For three days after the downpour and flood, we were isolated in the valley, the bridge had been washed away and the road at my house was blocked by large rocks and the road further down was washed away in many areas.

My family were unsure if I was ok as the last communication was on the Monday morning asking my son to come up and help me. They had no details of the event only what was on the news, and they were worried.

Over the next few days, I had some communication with other residents in the valley and by Wednesday we were able to wade through the creek. The road was a mess and cars had to park some distance away. During these few days I was spending my time moving rocks from the road so I could drive my car down the hill to the creek. I managed to clear half the blockage.

On the Thursday night my son and nephew arrived to help. Between us we unblocked the drains, filled large holes and repaired some areas of the creek to divert the water from hitting the bank next to the house.

We were able to walk out of the valley and drive to the hill at Ocean Shores to get internet and phone reception.

At present the situation has changed very slowly; After one month Telstra got our landline phones working again, as yet we do not have mobile reception.

Our bridge is yet to be replaced, we have just had our road repaired so we can drive in and out of the valley. We have done some temporary work on the creek crossing so 4wd cars can get in and out.

The effects of the flood on my personal life are ongoing.

I initially lost the six weeks work contract, and I was unable to take another contract until mid-April due to the issues outstanding with the flood damage.

Financially I am insecure as I have expenses for the repairs to the roads and bridges and

expected expenses for work on the creek bank which can't begin until the water level reduces.

I received the three thousand dollars in flood effected benefits from the government which helped to pay my mortgage, engineer report and living expenses until I could get back to work. I have paid four thousand so far in repairs to the roads, and we are waiting until the water level drops so we can get our bridge back in place, I am not sure how much this will be.

I am hoping I can begin repairs to the creek bank during winter, I am sure this cost will be thousands of dollars also.

The culverts and drains were also washed out and need repairs; the concrete causeway at my house has cracked and dropped a few centimetres, the pipe that takes water off the Koonyum range has also dropped and the culvert is full of rocks, this will also be a major job to repair. I am not sure how much this will be.

In the past months I have watched the news and seen the devastation and loss in my region, it has been heart breaking.

I am glad that there has been help for those who need it to return to their homes.

Though this has been heartening it has been financially stressful that I am not eligible for the return to home grants.

The repair of the environmental damage has a big cost to it. The repairs need to be considered and long lasting, we need heavy machinery and other technical experts to ensure the environment is built to withstand another flood.

I alone cannot afford to make the repairs, if you imagine all the water that ended up in Mullumbimby, the volume the ferocity and the damage it caused, then think where it came from; well, a huge volume of it raced past my house with volume and speed that moved

boulders the size of 3cubic meters weighing tons, that shook trees from their moorings, pushed bridges aside and made creeks into canyons. I alone cannot afford these repairs. It should not be up to private individuals to pay for rehabilitation of the environment. I have ensured that my house is structurally safe and above flood level. I cannot be expected to ensure the water flows in a measured way and then pay for the damage when it doesn't.

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

Unexpected amounts of water flowing through gullies with ill prepared drains and pipes

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

Nil physical assistance was given. I was isolated for four days after first flood and ten days after second flood. No communications via phone or internet. No government agency at any stage came to help.

1.5 Recovery from floods

Recovery is very slow. No government agency assistance, besides the \$3000 which was appreciated as I was without work for six weeks. Private residents in my area are paying for rehabilitation of roads, and a temporary creek crossing is now in place. All other work to drains, roads, creek banks, landslips has been done by myself at my own expense.

1.6 Any other matters

The hinterland of Mullumbimby is ill prepared to deal with the vast amounts of water experience at the end of February 2022. Previous developments in the 19th century and post second world war of drains and pipes need urgent upgrades. The environmental damaged caused by the massive water flow will take years to recover and if expected rain events occur at anything similar the degradation of the natural environment will impact surrounding residential

infrastructure so much it will be impossible to live in the hinterland area.

Upgrades of pipes and drains is essential and private landholders must be supported financially to ensure recover of the natural and built environment. Council must be financially able to extend their reach into areas in the hinterlands that currently they do not take any responsibility for.

Supporting documents or images
