

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
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Your details

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Email

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Submission details

I am making this submission as	A resident in a flood-affected area
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Submission type	I am making a personal submission
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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

Your story

Our farm experienced the worst flooding we have ever seen in 20+ years of owning the property.

Leading up to the peak of the flood I consistently checked the BOM app, local SES, and Floods Near Me and watched ABC television and felt that there was not enough 'plain english' warning

of the severity of the rain event that was coming.

Warnings were issued and in place for the main towns centred on the Tweed/Wilsons/Brunswick rivers, but there was little information available for a number of the small villages scattered across the Tweed region. We are located in Sleepy Hollow and it was difficult to find information that was relevant to us and where we are located.

We moved our livestock and equipment above the 2017 (cyclone Debbie) flood level in preparation for this rain event. By 11 am on the 28th of February the water began to exceed the 2017 level. We had to swim across floodwater in an attempt to save as much of our farm equipment as possible and move it from our sheds to the top of a nearby hill. We lost our stock feed and had generators, tools and other equipment be submerged by floodwaters. The water in this flood event was well over 1 metre higher than what we experienced in 2017.

By early afternoon on the 28th, we lost all telecommunications. Making or receiving phone calls was not possible and the internet went down. Eftpos was unavailable meaning many couldn't purchase food, and with roads cut ATMs could not be restocked. This continued for days, with extremely limited or no communications available. This made accessing information impossible. We had to solely rely on radio/television where available. Noting these services were also impacted. When these services were available the information on ABC news TV was very limited and focused on certain areas.

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#)

1.1 Causes and Tweed Shire Council does little to maintain the

contributing factors

creeks, drains and rivers throughout the LGA. The Mooball Creek is the closest outlet for our property. There is a build-up of sediment at the mouth and various sections of Mooball Creek. This limits the outflow of water during rainfall events, floodwaters can't escape and we experience flooding. Drains in council-owned lands adjoining our property are not maintained, the build-up of sediment and silt is making them shallow and they are being over-grown by vegetation.

It is also difficult as a landholder to maintain our internal drainage systems and outlets to the creek. The approvals process required to undertake any maintenance works is impossible to navigate and as an agricultural enterprise, you cannot afford the fees associated with preparing the required studies to lodge a DA (e.g. an environmental assessment). Some drains are tidal and contain mangroves - legislation severely restricts any chances of being able to maintain these drainage systems that have been historically installed on the property.

The housing, farming enterprises and businesses in our area are historical developments. The systems and infrastructure that have been put in place to maintain the viability of these uses need to be maintained. If they are not maintained due to the ever-increasing burden of red tape and government process it threatens their viability.

The complete lack of coordination of an emergency response immediately post-disaster event impacted negatively people's health and welfare.

1.2 Preparation and planning

In 2017 a range of infrastructure across the Tweed LGA was repaired after it was damaged and/or destroyed by the Cyclone Debbie flood event. During this 2022 flood event, much of the same infrastructure failed again resulting in widespread damage to properties and has

caused road closures impacting residents' abilities to access areas post-flood event (for example the Greenhills bridge in Murwillumbah).

When the government at any level is repairing infrastructure following an event or is undertaking betterment projects to upgrade infrastructure to withstand future events, appropriate flood planning levels should be used. Natural hazard events due to climate change are going to become more frequent and intense in the future, and government needs to be proactive and prepare for this. Business as usual is no longer an appropriate approach when dealing with and planning for these issues.

Improved warning systems and the bolstering of communication networks to withstand more severe and frequent natural hazard events are necessary. It is so dangerous when communications go completely down due to being unable to get up to date information and contact people.

Increased funding for the local emergency agencies and council to expand warning systems and flood water monitoring systems into more areas to allow for the communication of more accurate and up to date information.

1.3 Response to floods

The response to the flood was delayed, and it felt as if the government didn't truly understand the severity of the event unfolding. There were little to no boots on the ground from government agencies or the military for immediate disaster recovery.

The coordination of recovery efforts for the first week after the flood led volunteers and charities. The first feed drop for flood-affected livestock producers came for our area came from the 'need for feed' not from LLS or DPI. The first people helping to clean destroyed homes and businesses weren't the military or emergency services, it was volunteers. Ultimately it was only

the efforts of volunteers and community donations that kept so many in the area clothed, fed and informed and helped to get homes and businesses cleaned and operational again.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

The government should invest in further studies into the behaviour of floods, floodplain management and revising if current flood planning levels are appropriate. The findings of these studies must be communicated clearly and in inclusive language so that residents and business owners are aware of the risks they face. If the outcomes of risk studies indicate the risk in areas is too great, then buybacks and land swaps need to be initiated by the government.

1.5 Recovery from floods

Improved coordination and disaster recovery responses are needed. Ensuring boots are on the ground and the availability of essential supplies and equipment to assist people in recovery from these disaster events is critical.

Allowing people to simply build back or repair their homes to the same standard that existed pre-disaster event costs government, insurance companies and residents. Raising homes/businesses, mandating the use of flood compatible materials and requiring flood compatible designs are some of the ways building resilience can be improved. Funding or creating incentives for residents and businesses who are impacted by flooding to undertake such work will help to ensure the area is better prepared for the next flooding event, speed up future recovery efforts and save money.

1.6 Any other matters

The language used around flood events is also difficult to interpret. Minor, moderate and major are the terms that are used by government agencies, but it is unclear what this means for your individual property. And what the potential height ranges are for each of these flood levels in your particular area.

Education will also be an important factor in

preparing communities for future flood events
and to build resilience.

Supporting documents or images
