

**From:** [NSW Government](#)  
**To:** [Flood Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Floods Inquiry  
**Date:** Wednesday, 18 May 2022 9:48:25 PM

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## Your details

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**Title** Ms

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**First name** Verena

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**Last name** Hunt

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**Email** [REDACTED]

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**Postcode** 2482

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## Submission details

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**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

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**Your story** On the 10 days of February 20 + my area in Mullumbimby received continuous torrential rain recording 700mm. I became aware that as my property backed onto the Brunswick River that there was the possibility of the river flooding. I have only lived in my property on retirement last year and was told by long term residents that the most flooding they had ever seen was river water

entering from the back of the properties and down each side of the houses onto the street and down the storm water drains. Never entering the dwellings. I checked the river rising that evening and it was rising rapidly. I checked online to see if there were any warnings, I listened to the TV news, I checked the ABC online upto date news items. The BOM had "moderate" flood warning only for the Brunswick, no evacuation notice last check at 12.30 Monday morning. At 1.30 on the ABC there was an evacuation notice for Mullumbimby to the RSL. The SES had a checklist for items to have to hand in case of evacuation but no information regarding evacuation points or warnings. By this stage the two bridges leading into to the RSL evacuation point were flooded and the only roads to higher ground were also flooded. I was cut off from any early escape. By 3.00 the river had entered my property at great speed and was banking up to a veranda gate. I waded through knee high water to open the gates to let the water out to the front garden and out onto the street. A neighbour had apparently opened any other gate that they saw shut. The water kept rising and had entered my back doors on both sides of my house, I tried ringing the SES for advice on what to do as I am new to the area and thought that there may be emergency procedure not posted to the web site. I was asked to spell my suburb, told they did not know it and then the phone disconnected. I panicked and set up the ladder with a view to climbing on the roof with my cat. I am an 71 year old woman and could think of nothing else to do as the house was now totally under water from front to back and the towels I had set up to keep the water out were floating down the lounge to the front door with the force of the water and mud. At this stage of anxiety there was a knock on the door and two brave young people had waded through the surging river water to ask if I was OK. I said no, stuffed my cat into a carry bag and with one person on each arm we tracked through

the swirling muddy water now up to my crotch and I am 5.8. We managed to reach the only two storied house in the are where we found shelter with 17 other men women and children 5 dogs and 4 cats for the next 2 days. I will be forever grateful to the wonderful young woman Asher and young man who saved and sheltered so many of us as we watched two further flash floods over the next 2 days devastating all our homes, rendering us homeless and traumatised.

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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**

No warning to allow us to get to higher ground  
Move our belongings and most were lost including my lifetime of photos  
No clear check-list for emergency procedures  
Flash floods x 3 in 48 hours, first peaked at 4am in the pitch black of night

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### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

- o need for early warning system
- o need for clear evacuation points not only for fire but also flood and other disaster shelters--should be allocated according to mobility, childcare assistance, health issues, animals
- o clear communication procedure needs to be in place with community awareness as to how to access via all relevant media not just social media include local paper, ABC broadcast radio and TV
- o better warning systems for middle of the night eg Fire alarm, or air raid alarm if nosier. Many people were asleep in their flooded bedrooms unaware of danger, these more traumatised than most.

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### **1.3 Response to floods**

SES call centre was overloaded. Phones were not responding.  
Electricity was cut  
Phones were out of battery power, could not communicate with family, added stress. Luckily

house had gas cylinders so we could heat food and hot drink for 48 hours.

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**1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery**

Community help was overwhelming, young people helping old with moving personal possessions at risk to their health from contaminants in the mud  
Removing sludge drenched carpets to stop disease from sewage, people coming with bottled water, sandwiches and offers of help. All local donations, so grateful.

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**1.5 Recovery from floods**

Appreciate flood relief payment to help survive in the short term from Govt.  
Insurance company left a lot to be desired and added to stress by having inexperienced untrained staff manning the phones with no knowledge adding to stress. Two and a half hour wait to speak to anybody. Unreliable internet making it difficult to do online as directed by mechanical voice.  
Trauma affect ongoing, fear of torrential rain, reliant on friends for shelter.

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**1.6 Any other matters**

The army boys arrived two weeks too late to be of any real assistance in my area.  
They needed to be trained in emergency disaster response and sent in straight away as we do for a disaster in another country. Where were the generators, the pop up canteens, the emergency housing pods that we have sent to Sri Lanka during the Tsunami, to Lombok etc. We were told not to drink the water but where were the water stations etc to help the thousands affected. Are we not as important in our need as our neighbours. Would it not be as advantageous a photo opportunity? I have paid taxes for 50 years of working in this country could I not be assisted to the same level by my own Govt.? Many, including me are now homeless for the foreseeable future as my home will take up to 12 months to be habitable after the sludge damage, mould and sewage contamination.,

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**Supporting documents or images**

