

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
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Attachments: [WRLG NSW Flood Inquiry Submission May 2022.pdf](#)

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Submission details

I am making this submission as	Other
Submission type	I am submitting on behalf of my organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Wilsons River Landcare Group Incorporated
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	President
Consent to make submission public	I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [WRLG NSW Flood Inquiry Submission May 2022.pdf](#)
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May 20, 2022

Submission to the NSW Flood Inquiry

RE Recommendations for action around future flood risks to communities and ecosystems

The North Coast of NSW is an area of extremely high biodiversity. Where we now see a diversity of weed species, lowland subtropical rainforest once grew all along the banks of the Wilsons River and its tributaries. The rivers being the first point of access, in the mid to late 1800's these riparian forests were the first to fall to the needs of new settlers for red gold (red cedar) and other timbers, and for subsistence agriculture.

Prior to European settlement the Big Scrub was the largest tract of lowland subtropical rainforest in Australia. This rainforest has since been reduced to less than 1% of its former range. As a result the NSW Scientific Committee recently determined that lowland rainforest on floodplain in the NSW North Coast Bio-region is an endangered ecological community. Large-scale reforestation is needed to offset ecological degradation in such extensively-cleared subtropical landscapes.

The Wilsons River Landcare Group Inc. (WRLG) formed in 1990 making it one of the oldest landcare groups in NSW. We have been planting with the group since 1993. The Wilsons River Landcare Group has undertaken work both on private lands downstream and upstream of Lismore and on the riverbank in Lismore itself. WRLG, with a current membership of 100 volunteers, now concentrates its efforts on urban riverbank regeneration, re-vegetation and stabilisation with the support of many other community groups and organisations.

The biggest event (usually) for each year is Lismore's National Tree Day where around hundreds of people from all walks of life come together on the riverbank to plant between 1000-2000 trees and celebrate our long history of riverbank restoration. Another significant project is the Wilson's River Schools Project funded by the NSW Environmental Trust. This project has been running for over nine years where Wilsons River Landcare is collaborating with seven Lismore schools, Envite, Lismore City Council, Rous Water, and other conservation groups - across six riverbank sites. All our sites across Lismore have been badly affected by floods.

The Wilsons River Landcare Group is a member of Richmond Landcare Inc and Landcare NSW. We know the scale of the impact is much greater than our sites on the riverbank, all of which have been directly affected through erosion, sediment, loss of plantings and the deposition of rubbish and debris. The entire landscape of the Richmond Catchment has been transformed. Numerous Landcare sites need immediate support to protect previous efforts, with new sites also now needing urgent attention. Landcare networks have a membership of over one hundred local Landcare groups, they actively participate and advocate for our catchment in the regional network. Given the scale of devastation after the catastrophic February and March 2022 floods we are out on the ground and know the scale of the need is overwhelming and currently outside of the capacity of flood and landslide-affected landowners.

1a - The causes of and factors contributing to the frequency, intensity, timing and location of floods

1. The historical legacy of deforestation of the Leycester Creek and Wilsons Creek catchments have had a serious impact on flooding of the Wilsons River. We recommend large scale catchment revegetation projects be funded across all land tenures, drawing on local expertise in bush regeneration and landcare.
2. The Lismore Levee has disconnected people from the river, increased river heights for North Lismore residents and reduced preparedness for flooding for East Lismore and the CBD. If the levee is retained, we would like to see flood simulation apps to ensure people understand the risk of floods to their businesses and properties.
3. We recommend that the priority actions of the Wilsons Catchment Action Plan (2008) and the Coastal Zone Management Plan (2011) be funded and implemented and the continuous cycle of planning be halted until progress has been made – we know what needs to be done, there just needs to be the funding to do it.

1c - Responses to floods, particularly measures to protect life, property and the environment

1. We recommend that the Lismore Sewage Treatment plant be fixed immediately or in that event that it cannot be, that the river receive some form of compensation for the ongoing pollution of the Wilsons River.
2. We recommend further support be given to riverbank land managers to remove flood including plastic from hay bales and other debris upstream from Lismore, and the bulk rubbish that remains on properties downstream of Lismore.
3. We recommend the immediate investigation into the asphalt spill in south Lismore, and the ongoing remediation of Hollinsworth Creek.

1d - Recovery, including housing, clean-up, financial support, community engagement and longer-term community rebuilding.

1. Landcare networks are crucial for recovery and building resilience throughout our region. They need core funding.
2. We recommend the immediate scaling up of funding for priority riparian and landslip remediation.
3. We would like to see land use planning mechanisms incentivise the redevelopment of industrial areas off the Wilsons River floodplain.
4. The Wilsons River needs to be recognised as a stakeholder in its own right in any conversation about the future of Lismore. We recommend the Richmond Riverkeeper be given a seat at the table.

Yours in rivercare,

Alex Stephens

President

Wilsons River Landcare Group Inc.