

**INQUIRY INTO RESPONSE TO MAJOR FLOODING
ACROSS NEW SOUTH WALES IN 2022**

Name: Mr Ray Boland

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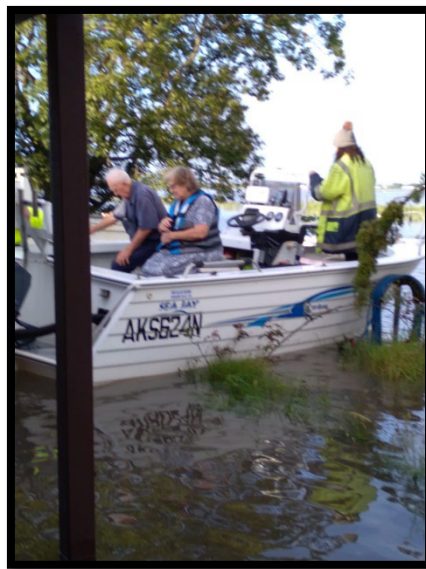
Submission

to the

Legislative Council Select Committee on the
response to major flooding across

New South Wales in 2022

From: Ray Boland



Ray and Claire Boland being rescued from their home 1st March 2022 at 7 am.

Their home was built on a flood mound 60 cm higher than the 1 in 100-year flood height.

Ms Shaza Barbar
Principal Council Officer
Email: Floods@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The purpose of this submission is to provide information to the Select Committee regarding the March 2022 flood level of the Richmond River on my farm on Kilgin Road, Woodburn. The submission will also provide historical information regarding the 1890's and 1954 flood levels on my property. I have attached a map of the Woodburn/Kilgin area to assist the Committee in reviewing my submission. This includes the location of the old farmhouse (red dot) which is used as the reference point for my submission regarding previous flood levels on the property.

By way of background information, I am an 89-year-old sugar cane farmer residing on a farm that has been in my family since 1866. I have lived on the farm for most of life and have seen a number of floods in the lower Richmond River.

The 1954 Flood at Kilgin Road was approximately 10 inches in the old house on my farm. At the height of the 1954 Flood, my brother Tom paddled his surf ski back from Kilgin to Salty Lagoon at Evans Head (Salty Lagoon marked with a orange dot on the attached map). He told me that the flood water was almost into Salty Lagoon and that he could have kicked the water though with his boot to the sea.

This recent flood, which was almost 2 metres higher than the 1954 flood, did not run into the sea at Salty Lagoon or even get close to doing so. Why not?

I spoke with my Grandmother (Catherine Boland) after the 1954 flood. During the big flood of the 1890's, Catherine lived in the same house at Kilgin that I later lived in during the 1954 flood. During 1890's flood, Catherine reported that the water had almost gone into her home at Kilgin. She was a very young woman at the time. She had overheard the men speaking about the flood waters running into the sea somewhere near Evans Head. This was consistent with the statements made by my brother Tom during the 1954 flood.

Mr Max Leeson, who now lives in Queensland, said that his father had also shared information about the floods. Max's father, who lived a Bungawalbyn, at the time, told Max that there was a big flood in the 1890's. The water somehow got around Lang's Hill and ran into the sea at Salty Lagoon. Lang's Hill is just north of Woodburn and is directly across the Richmond River from the old house (This is marked on the attached map in purple).

Mr Keith Robinson is another local who experienced the 1954 flood. He claims that at Patches beach floodwaters did trickle into the sea. While this is further along coast past Wardell, it does indicate that floodwaters in the past have been able to spread or disperse over larger area towards the sea. Arguably, this has helped reduce the backup of water in previous floods and the potential for higher flood levels.

The 2022 floodwater rose very quickly in the Woodburn area catching many people by surprise. Unlike previous floods, there was also a significant run in the flow of the water over my property. It resulted in a water tank near the old house being moved a distance of 360 metres from its stand.

The difference between the 1890's and 1954 flood heights was **about 30 cm**, whereas, the difference between the 1954 and 2022 floods **was 2 metres**. Clearly, the displacement of the 2022 floodwater on the lower Richmond River is a matter which the Committee could investigate during its deliberations.

It would seem obvious that in the past floodwater from the Richmond River could connect with Salty Lagoon, but this has now become blocked or restricted. This may have been due to changing levels in landscape brought about by sand mining in the area after the 1954 flood. Nevertheless, the information provided by locals indicates that the flood levels of the 1890's and 1954 were able to flow naturally towards the nearby coast thereby spreading the volume of water.

So, what has occurred to change this? I would suggest that in more recent times the new Pacific Motorway has had a significant part to play in how the water now runs during a flood period. Arguably, it has created a barrier causing the floodwater to backup rather than allowing it to move naturally towards the coast. Reports from residents in Broadwater confirm that the 2022 floodwaters appeared to come along the route of the new Highway that runs behind the town towards Wardell.

The attached map shows where the Pacific Motorway runs from Woodburn to Broadwater. Nowhere along that strip of the Motorway is there provision to facilitate the natural movement of floodwaters. The failure to consider this in the design of the Motorway, or to take account of the concerns of locals during local information meetings on the its route, has contributed to the devastation suffered by farmers and residents along the lower Richmond River.

Unfortunately, with the change in weather conditions, the Pacific Motorway will only make the level of flooding on the lower Richmond River worse. Urgent modifications need to be made to the Motorway to aid in the natural flow of floodwater towards the sea. I would ask the Committee to investigate this issue further and to make appropriate recommendations on the matter to mitigate the effects of future floods in the area.

I am happy to discuss this information and provide further thoughts on this matter to aid the Committee in its deliberations.

Ray Boland

