

Supplementary  
Submission  
No 25a

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

**Name:** Ms Debrah Novak

**Date Received:** 15 May 2022

---

On behalf of the primary producers in the Northern Rivers (over 5000 registered) I would like you to host a face to face session with them in the Clarence Valley to hear the plight of our farmers, fishers and horticulturalists.

## **2022 Clarence Valley Flood Feedback Session No 1**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 Ulmarra Showground 10am-2pm**

**Co-ordinated by Clarence Valley Food Inc, sponsored by the Yamba Farmers & Producers Market, Grafton Twilight Food Market, Feed for Friends, Holiday Coast Meats, Ulmarra Campdraft and Clarence Catering. Supported by Clarence Valley Landcare.**

**30 people attended event, white board, emails received, oral statements**

### **Session No 2**

**5<sup>th</sup> May Grafton Regional Saleyards**

**Session No 1 white boards added to on this day**

**Around 50 looked over and contributed to the white board.**

**Location of comments:** Ulmarra, Pillay Valley, Lawrence, Swan Creek, Lower Coldstream, Gillet's Ridge, Tucabia, Braunstone, Brushgrove, Grafton, James Creek, Yamba, South Grafton, Maclean, Palmers Island, Ilarwill, Southgate, Tullymorgan

### **PARTICIPANT ISSUES**

SES not in our area

SES had no co-ordination skills

SES didn't know the area

SES not asking the relevant questions

SES refused to rescue

SES decisions made in Wollongong

SES went to bed during the peak

Some SES and RFS people are too old to rescue and assist, it is used more for a social club

RFS wouldn't share their equipment

ADFA did not have a boat to deliver parcels through floodwaters at Ilarwill

No internet services

No phone services

Land line still not working (2 months later)

3 weeks flooded in on Lower Coldstream Road (longest ever)

Flooded in at James Creek for a month (first time ever)

Unable to access purchased feed due to road closures

Need support for stranded livestock

Grant funding only available after funds have been spent with a chronic cashflow shortage

Difficulty in obtaining irrigation licenses

Co-ordination of cattle trucks (particularly for elderly farmers without mobiles, or who don't have service or if it gets wet)

No winter feed because water holding on paddocks that have not had water on them before or unable to drain away due to RMS drains

Satellite phones need subsidising

Time factor trying to help other people truck their cattle out while having the need to lift stuff in sheds, or get hay ready etc

No suitable communal stockyards at flood reserves to move cattle out on big trucks

Grafton Livestock Saleyards doesn't have a roof to protect livestock from sun or rain (welfare issue)

BOM reading and modelling were unreliable for decision making

Hyacinth spread across paddocks and fences (not addressed by Council prior to floods)

Chemical contaminated Hyacinth spread across paddocks (Council, SES, RFS, NSW Fire Brigade, DPI, DPIe, LLS, DPI Biosecurity, Resilience NSW all called, hyacinth is still sitting in the paddocks)

No one to help clean up hyacinth in paddocks (SES has called but has not done the work)

No agencies would rescue our livestock

Service NSW slow response time

Incorrect information by Service NSW

Primary Producer Funding/Grant eligibility criteria for 75% on farm income is the biggest issue

Flood gates on drains not maintained

Flood gates on drains not working or tested

There is a possibility some flood gates were stuck open or shut letting flood water in early or letting it sit on land too long after the river has receded

Need Wilcox Bridge fixed

Supermarket supply chain disruptions to coastal villages of Yamba, Iluka and Woolli

Food supply chains interrupted to NDIS and Meals on Wheels clients who were cut off during the flood

No cold storage facilities for supermarkets / farmers to hold interstate supplies when roads are blocked

No awareness of aerial support to do food supply drops for humans and livestock

No awareness of Local Emergency Management Plans

Local Emergency Management Committee does not have community or business at the table

Aerial support is not provided free for commercial enterprises

Knowledge of aerial support not forthcoming from DPI, SES, RFS for livestock

Only three days feed supply provided to livestock by LLS or DPI

B Double truck disruptions leaving and entering the Clarence Valley through South Grafton/8 Mile Lane

Pumps not big enough to empty flood waters out of Maclean

No pumps available at Palmers Island to empty flood waters out the village

Maclean sandbagging unco-ordinated

No communal hay storage facility

Unmaintained drains across the Lower Clarence

Medical supply chain services interrupted eg prescription refilling

Evidence collection / validation of damages to accelerate emergency responses / funding

Townhall meetings before, during and after emergency events

Lack of knowledge of what to do in a natural disaster by community

Tides kept flood waters back

Local knowledge and readings not used in BOM information

Once peak hits Grafton everywhere else is forgotten

Lack of gauges and river height readings throughout the Lower Clarence

Ongoing supply of fodder is very grim

Flood waters in paddocks have been there weeks longer than usual killing winter feed

Unable to access vet supplies for livestock

Tractors are unable to sow winter crops due to the grounds being waterlogged need aerial support

No access to drier land

No contractors available

Not enough mobile loading ramps at the Grafton Regional Sale yards

Need extra cattle yards at the sale yards

No feed on hand as having to wait a number of days is just too hard.

No facility to store the livestock feed and unload the feed

No tractors to assist in moving fodder around

No power, water and septic

No water trucks for drinking water/ washing and cleaning

No one point of call as to who calls the shots and how it is done in the Clarence Valley

No boats on hand for transport or rescues

No food van or trailer on hand to cook basic meals and to help feed locals in the impacted area

Use landholder's local river recording as well as BOM information

Emergency broadcast should be done more frequently after Grafton has peaked for lower river people

Tides pushed held back floods upriver

Unreliable predictions

RMS impact prediction on farmers was 5%, lived experience after 4 floods is 50% impact

## PARTICIPANT SOLUTIONS

1. Check all flood reserves to see if they require permanent or mobile stock yards to load cattle
2. Gillet's Ridge flood reserve needs permanent stock yards to load cattle
3. Consult with local landholders upriver with local knowledge of previous flooding and rainfall
4. Put hyacinth clean up out to private contractors
5. Consider a more thoughtful road upgrade and maintenance strategy
6. Dredge the rivers more frequently
7. Review government natural disaster grants given the number of multiple natural disasters
8. Need to set up a local community and business (include farms) natural disaster emergency NFP team who can inform three tiers of government and rescue and response agencies of needs on the ground so they can be tasked earlier and as it happens
9. Need to set up a local community and business (includes farms) natural disaster emergency NFP management team that can triage local human and livestock needs and manage donations (includes money)
10. Need to set up a local community and business (includes farms) natural disaster emergency NFP management team that can invest in training their communities
11. Need to establish human and livestock food triage centre for frozen, wet and dry goods at Grafton Airport for Clarence Valley and Northern Rivers natural disasters as it is the only airport that does not get flooded and is beside the M1 as a logistics headquarters (air support and truck accessible)
12. Local paid co-ordinator to support recovery, grant writing and equipment sharing
13. Ongoing supply of fodder is a real issue need someone to co-ordinate logistics and farm workers
14. Need strategic gravel supplies to fix farm access
15. Need a manual flood gauge on the Coldstream River, Palmers Island, Sportsman's Creek, Palmers Island, Esk River and Lawrence
16. Need greater flood mitigation, seeding dams or reservoirs
17. Mitigation needs to clean out drains
18. Need tide and gauge readings and moon phases
19. Communal hay storage sheds assessable by trucks during floods/ability to mobilise at short notice
20. Need to stand up practising nurses who are local and community centred to refill prescriptions
21. Establish local officers to conduct drone records and site inspections to accelerate response and actions to circumvent bureaucratic red tape
22. Establish local community facilitators to engage and record a collective voice and needs for prioritised actions of local area
23. Flood drain management points of contact and who is the responsible body
24. Flood drain management should include contracted farmers to carry out the work without red tape
25. Educate people how to read flood gauges, river readings and iso bars
26. Write clear public records of "in this flood this gauge read this and was x metres and this is how the flood was further downstream"
27. Manual river readings system needs to come back
28. Emergency broadcaster ABC Radio should report more frequently during a flood
29. All vehicles should carry a radio
30. All homes should have a radio
31. Flood plans should include a CB radio
32. Need to change criteria to make transfer of irrigation licenses between catchments easier
33. Have a person on the ground in each village who has contact numbers, telephone, and radio of farmers to support them and check on welfare and needs
34. Have a team of volunteers for the before and after flood rush (RFS, SES, trained cadets, community helpers) who can help do the mundane work and easy tasks to free up farmers to get up on the road to focus on shifting cattle
35. Subsidise helicopter cropping through grants
36. CVFi would like to thank everyone who contributed to this knowledge gathering

THANKYOU THANKYOU THANKYOU to our unsung heroes of the Clarence Valley February, March and April 2022 floods.

These heroes are everyday people who did extraordinary things to help humanity when it was on its knees.

Yesterday you were mentioned in the same breath as our ANZACS which is something very unique and special.

Today I would like to personally acknowledge the contribution and extraordinary efforts of many Clarence Valley residents who greatly assisted and went above and beyond for our community, each other and including our neighbouring LGA's during the Feb/March/April 2022 floods and their ongoing impacts.

Some of those who people who assisted include:

**(CLARENCE VALLEY 2022 FLOOD FB GROUP)**

Over 2000 group members including flood affected people needing help joined within weeks.

50 plus active volunteers were out helping people daily.

Group acted as a triage platform for help requests on FB and people.

Worked with SES who tasked our volunteers to jobs.

Council and the Recovery Centre referred people to us who required help.

75 properties attended including a weekend at Palmers Island where 30 volunteers helped the whole community.

Ulmarra, Calliope, Kangaroo Creek, Southgate, Coldstream and Tucabia all supported with our local volunteers

**(CLARENCE VALLEY FEED FOR FRIENDS)**

Co-ordinated livestock feed for 4000 head of cattle for the past 8 weeks

Organised logistics, deliveries and pickups to and from venues

Outsourced free hay from across Australia

Spoken with 60 primary producers to access their situation to support them with stock feed and grants

Triaged farmers and registered them to other charities eg Need For Feed Hay Runners

Connected farmers to DPI to organise hay drops

Liaised with NORCO to ensure farmers were getting their support

Sourced agistment paddocks to move cattle out, vets and farriers

Weekly welfare checks on farmers

**(CLARENCE VALLEY FLOOD ANGELS FOR WOODBURN/CORAKI)**

200 volunteers

Emergency kitchen hub created with round the clock food prep and cooking

2000 people fed every day for 5 weeks

Woodburn collection hub organised to receive donations

Coordinated donations and trucks from the Clarence Valley and Sydney

Coordinated local donation hub in Yamba

Mud army checked in on every house in Woodburn and Coraki

Volunteer food service delivered to homes daily as no one has cars

Numerous rescues performed using own watercraft

Daily welfare checks on residents

Volunteers travelled from The Clarence Valley everyday to the impact zone

**(MACLEAN LEVEE WALL ARMY)**

Combination of local youth, business owners, teachers, River Street residents volunteers and CVC personnel

Everyone worked hand to hand in a united effort to save the Maclean levee on the flood peak

Sandbagging occurred from the eastern entry to Maclean from the fish co-op to down behind the RSL

Multiple teams worked back to back across different sections

Council employee (Raff) had exceptional leadership, was calm and coordinated when speaking to the volunteers

(Raff) provided ongoing support over the following days and taught appropriate techniques for the sandbags

Volunteers with utes ferried sandbags filled by other volunteers working at the SES HQ

Efforts were constant and more challenging from 11pm to 3am

Chain gangs formed to pass the sandbags along the levee wall

Minimal night-time vision of levee was rectified by volunteers sourcing hand held lights

Water bottles were supplied by caravan park owners and SES HQ

The level of fatigue both emotional and physical in the following days was unexpected

It would have been good to have a debrief and check in and celebrate what happened on the Maclean levee

Teacher Chris Kirkland was exceptional during the event supporting his community members

Farmer Ross Farlow and his V8 engine water pump turned the tide

Shane Honeyman advised about the boils along the levee line and how laying plastic down the water side

(WOOMBAH/GOODWOOD ISLAND EVAC BASE CAMP)

Established an evacuation base camp at Wombah Playground for flooded residents from Goodwood Island

Co-ordinated food, medical, tradesman and clothing for residents

Supported residents with sourcing documents and travel

Co-ordinated RFS truck for food deliveries

(ILUKA VOLUNTEERS)

Local residents helped sandbag the levy wall on Marandowie Dr during the floods resulting in saving a large number of homes from inundation and assisted other members in their community who were in need at this time.

(TUCABIA)

Local residents from Tucabia co-ordinated, paddled and boated to Grafton to get emergency supplies for their village.

(SHARK CREEK REBELS WITH A CAUSE)

Paddled in and out of paddocks that had become waterways to get emergency supplies for the neighbours and friends.

(BRAUNSTONE BRAVE HEARTS)

Checked in on a farmer mate who had no power, livestock supplies, telecommunication, or food for 8 days. They supported two other farmer friends who were also isolated. Ferried supplies to Ilarwill for the Army which was a 32 klms paddle.

**PLEASE NOTE** - the above flood responses came from local community members who stepped up, formed their own groups that became operational to fill an immediate gap that was not being met at the time. These people mobilised their networks and friends to assist in this flood disaster.

(NEW SCHOOL OF ARTS SOUTH GRAFTON)

Over 300 Emergency Food Hampers

More than 120 Personal Hygiene and Household Cleaning Hampers

Over 700 free meals

Liaised with the SES (Grafton, Ulmarra, Brushgrove, Lawrence) and RFS (Woombah) to distribute emergency food hampers to isolated community members during the floods.

They have been supplying the Recovery Centres in Grafton and Maclean with Emergency Food Hampers and Personal Hygiene and Household Cleaning Hampers on request.

The Recovery Centres referred people to NSOA to access Emergency Relief (including GIVIT requests). In addition we have provided assistance for flood affected community members to access flood recovery payments, distributed donated towels & bedding, provided hot showers and meals in the Hub, distributed thousands of dollars worth of donated gift cards and assisted people to access donation of household good and tools through GIVIT.

The community members they assisted include people from: Grafton, South Grafton, Coutts Crossing, Wooli, Ulmarra, Southgate, Eatonsville, Tucabia, Kungala, Pillar Valley, Glenugie, Maclean, Swan Creek, Lawrence, Collum Collum, Brushgrove, Kangaroo Creek, Jackadgery, Woombah, Goodwood Island

(MEND & MAKE DO SOUTH GRAFTON)

100's of Caring Kits (Kitchen, Linen, Cleaning, Washing, Kitchen, Toiletry) distributed to flood victims

(CLARENCE VALLEY BUSINESSES)

Donated money, hosted flood raisers, volunteered their staff and donated their plant and equipment to support local and regional flood victims and livestock.

Farmers triaged around 10,000 head of cattle through the Grafton Regional Saleyards at south Grafton to get them to safety.

Local vets were among a group of seven vets who volunteered their time to rescue animals during the height of the floods in northern NSW.

(EMERGENCY SERVICES & SERVICE CLUBS)

thank you to all who were involved.

If I have missed someone, I am deeply sorry.