

**Submission
No 78**

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

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Date Received: 24 June 2022

2022 Flood Inquiry Submission – Clare Margaret Carusi

Terms of Reference

1.1. Causes and contributing factors

I am 86 years of age and have lived in the Woodburn area all of my life.

I have experienced all the floods throughout the years, the 1954, the 1974 being the most significant up until this February/March 2022. Never in my lifetime did I ever expect the flood to enter my home (built high on a mound way above council regulations) but it came in and up to a height of almost 2 metres inside the house. The original old farmhouse was almost completely covered by water. This water came at an unimaginable speed raising almost as you looked at it. It was like something from a horror movie.

There was raw sewerage bubbling up through the toilets and spewing onto the carpets and into cupboards etc.

What was so different about this flood? The only thing I can think of that was so different was the newly constructed **M1 Motorway**. I used to wonder what/if any effect this would have on the district in times of flood. It acted like a dam wall, holding water in/ the water could not escape anywhere- much to the detriment of all the locals. What a nightmare it was and is. This needs to be investigated and a resolution put in place to create some flood escapes through the motorway so the water can get away.

Also I recall in or around the early 1960's how the river that our farm adjoins was dredged and they would pump the residue onto our land. This has not occurred since the 1960's. I can imagine the build up of sedimentation over all those years.

In addition the local Fabri-dam on Tuckombil canal played a significant role in times of flood. To my knowledge this has not been operational for many many years.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM): There was insufficient warning and no accurate projection of water levels.

State Emergency Services (SES): Is it appropriate to have the SES control centre at Wollongong? Surely it would make more sense to have it locally where local knowledge is essential. I heard of many stories after this flood where the SES (due to its location at

Wollongong) had no idea where local roads were etc. It's a wonder there was not a huge loss of lives in this flood. But for the action of some locals I think there would have been.

Resilience NSW (The need for emergency evacuation properly maintained & permanent centres)

From all accounts the local evacuation centre at Woodburn was a complete shambles. There should have been emergency supplies on hand, toiletries, baby needs, showers, toilets, bedding, mattresses, first aid equipment, food and water.

Organisation: who was in charge?

Flood reserves for cattle: There needs to be flood reserves for cattle. This should be mandatory. If this was in place with good fencing and loading ramps maybe we could have saved some of our 150 cattle that were drowned in this disastrous event.

Communications: This failed due to the fact that the facilities were affected by flood water. In times like these natural disasters, communication is imperative. Mobile phones are peoples lifelines in times of floods.

In addition, the need to be able to see street signs in larger towns such as Lismore is critical. People trapped inside homes and saying their street location when all street signs are covered by flood water. There needs to be some landmarks at certain points in all towns so that they can be used as markers in times of natural disasters.

1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery.

The hubs that have been established in the local communities have been a big asset. It is difficult to complete forms and provide details when some people have lost absolutely everything, their computers, hard drives, laptops, filing /paperwork, ID, mobile phones etc. In some cases only now are they getting back online with their internets etc after some months post flood.

1.5 Recovery from floods

It will take years to recover from this flood event. Some people will never recover, they will sell up and move on. The trauma that a lot of people have been through will last their lifetime. I certainly never thought I would experience such a natural peril during my lifetime. There needs to be action in many many areas so that others do not have to experience what these people affected by this event have been through.

I consent to the publishing of this submission with my name but do not wish to be invited to give evidence at any hearing.