

# 2022 Floods: Reflection

5 April 2022

*This abridged text, from Carmel Warnock, working at Trinity Catholic College (formerly Marist Brothers' High School and St Mary's College prior to their amalgamation in 1985) in Lismore NSW, describes some of the challenges facing the College and wider communities of Lismore who continue to negotiate flood damage and threatening rains. Carmel was previously with the CRA Secretariat.*

“Diabolically busy doesn't quite capture work here at Trinity and what is happening just down the road. I live just 20 kilometres away in Alstonville which has become a busy metropolis, housing the evacuees who were evacuated a second time from their camper trailers, tents and caravans. Our showgrounds now house them. Our shops and roads are busy all the time, and army tankers and aid workers make travel between Lismore, Alstonville and Ballina very slow. Road closures mean supplies can't get in, so food and fuel have been scarce or empty. Today, we are hopeful for more supplies as the roads open up again.

“Some people (a handful of businesses in Lismore) were just starting to move their equipment back into their shops to recommence trading, only to have to evacuate a second time. As if the first flood wasn't bad enough. Some lost what little they salvaged from the first one. The mounds of 'rubbish' (actually, people's lives) piled high on the verges got washed away into their once cleaned yards and into other areas. A huge kick in the guts for these poor people.

“The 'light' in all of this was that people were still evacuated from the CBD and low-lying areas when the second flood hit, so there were not many people in need of evacuation, hence fewer physical casualties. Casualties in terms of mental health are something else again.

“Two major floods in a month, so many displaced and homeless families, loss of jobs and income, staff directly impacted and dealing with Covid has made getting back to school complex and challenging. At Trinity College we have relocated 7-10s at Southern Cross University, while Years 11&12 are being relocated to Woodlawn. That is, we will operate at Trinity Catholic College Lismore, SCU Campus / Woodlawn Campus.

“The Trinity Leadership Team is amazing. I am in awe of their innovative solutions and capacity to stay positive through all of this. I am so privileged to be working with them, and I feel confident we are in good hands. We have contingencies on top of contingencies as so many things change from day to day. There are many students who can't even get to school because of landslips and bridges that have been washed away so they are having online learning (if they can get internet!).

“When we have time to stop and reflect, it's the wonderful young people at Trinity who keep us going. We find light in the darkness. The motivation to 'carry on' with the Marist and Presentation spirits is alive and well.

“Many of the people of Lismore and surrounds are dazed and exhausted. There's so much sadness, yet so much good will, with local and charitable community assistance being made available. The trauma is real and palpable - vicarious as well as direct trauma. You can't escape it. And it can't be ignored. And there's more rain predicted, possibly by Wednesday. Please God it doesn't happen. Please pray for us.”

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