

T My name's Tony Duffy. Alicia and myself moved to Daintree on 7th December 2018 just prior to all these floods. In particular the big one was Australia Day night.

On Australia Day it was torrential rain, absolutely torrential rain. We'd had two floods prior to Australia Day in our six weeks here, so we had an indication of how heavy it can be and what happens with the rivers around us and so we'd had a rough idea. It was a quick, steep learning curve. So when the rain started on Australia Day we were pretty much comparing it to a reasonably large flood which I believe was the fourth highest flood in the region in a long time that we'd had a few weeks earlier. So when the water got to about the level that it did for that particular flood and the rain wasn't abating, we knew potentially we were in a bit of strife because it was getting heavier and heavier and paddocks all disappeared, and we knew we basically had to evacuate.

We were staying in the manager's residence of "Tranquility on the Daintree" here which we manage and approximately five metres higher up and 200 metres from the manager's residence is Tranquility Lodge which was a holiday lodge. So we basically at about 6pm realised that we had to get moving and get out of the farmhouse, get out of the manager's residence because the water was coming up very quickly and it was, we were pretty certain that it was going to go under and between the two properties, the manager's residence and the Lodge, is a dip, is a causeway, is a sort of floodway and we knew we had to get across that before it became uncrossable.

So at about 6pm I decided to take the generator from the manager's residence and bring it up here to the farmhouse in case we lost power, and anticipating that we were probably need to get out in the next hour or so. In that 3-4 minute trip between the manager's residence and the Lodge, the water came up, it was coming up literally before your eyes. It was rising inches in minutes. I mean it was, so I threw the generator up at the Lodge and came flying back down to grab the family. We all thought we still probably had an hour. We all jumped in the car and we literally grabbed the dog, the kids, and we just made it across the floodway area between the two properties. The water basically was up to the, halfway up the doors. And started to move the vehicle off the road which was quite scary but we did across and we did get up to the Lodge.

P Tell us how old your kids are.

T 2, 4, and 6. Willow Grace is 2, Indiana Rose is 4 and Ryder Cohen (?) is 6. They're pretty little so it was pretty traumatic but they'd seen it all before in the 6 weeks we'd been here. They just thought it's what happens here. It rains. They weren't too phased by it. Luckily over the next few hours it did get pretty hairy, they were asleep, so they slept through the worst of it. At about 7 o'clock there was a huge explosion which we believe was the power lines and the transformers on the boxes, because by that time they were getting pretty close to being underwater. It was pretty much dark I think at that stage wasn't it, yeah. So we lost all the power then and it just kept raining and raining. It was getting harder and harder.

A We went to bed because the power went out, thinking at that stage we didn't know that it was going to reach the farmhouse really. We thought it would get up the back yard or maybe through the back door, but we went to bed thinking we'll just ride it out, it'll be fine now. And then that was probably about 8 o'clock we went to bed and was trying to fall asleep and the dog kept going crazy on the balcony. She's normally a very settled down, she doesn't make a sound. We kept going 'What's wrong, what's wrong' and trying to calm her down and going back to bed and then about half past 11 I think it was, the home line rang

and, because we still had a land line phone plugged in and the phone rang and it was the sirens going off saying that it was about to exceed 2014 flood levels. It was a warning from the council.

T Recorded message from the council.

A So that's when we thought 'OK what's going on'. We took a torch out to the balcony and the water had reached up to the bottom of the balcony at the Lodge here.

P How high would that be?

T I think it's about, to get to the higher thing it's about 15 metres up.

A It got to about 18 metres at its peak.

T To be honest I can't remember.

A I think at its peak it was about 18 metres.

T Was it that high? I had a feeling 15 and a half.

A Don't quote me on that, but I think it was about 18 metres

(phone rings)

P We might just stop for a minute.

T Sorry about that.

7.56

DUFFY #2

A So we looked over the balcony with the torch and the water was literally lapping at the bottom of the balcony, like little waves kind of things and that was when basically we had a little bit of a panic attack because of the level it was here, it's gone straight through the house down there.

T We knew our stuff that we paid \$5000 to get delivered up here was all gone.

A I got a brand new load of furniture delivered 3 days prior.

T It was about the first time in our lives we'd ever bought new furniture. All gone. All gone.

P Were you insured?

T No. We tried to get contents insurance three days before the flood

A they don't cover for floods up here

T because of the proximity of the Daintree and being in the rainforest, we were knocked back, which was probably a wise move by them,

A (laughs) We lost our other car as well. The water went about half-way up the engine bay in the other car.

T We had a car written off.

A That was parked somewhere where people that have been here forever have told us, the water wouldn't go there. They didn't believe us that the car was half way under. That was parked in a spot where, it was pretty high ground, you would've thought that it wouldn't have gone through it.

T Took something extra ordinary to get to that level. We didn't expect it, no one did. It wasn't even really forecast so there was, I think it caught a lot of people out, not just the newbies to the Daintree like us, it caught a lot of people out.

P Where did you live before?

T Maggie Island.

A Dry tropics.

T Never rained there.

P So the call that came through from the council was pretty handy.

A It was pretty late.

T It was what it was. It didn't make any difference to us. There's nothing you could've done either way. I would say we needed that call, it's easy in hindsight, but with radar, see we had no internet, nothing available to know, even from 7 o'clock when we basically lost power and no internet, you can't even check radars and go 'This isn't going to stop'. We had no idea other than what's happening at that time. People external to here I would've hoped would have had a lot better idea and by 7, 8pm, we could have benefitted a lot more from that messaging, we could've put our stuff up higher and potentially saved a lot of stuff. So to be honest, it was probably quite the opposite. It wasn't handy for us. It was way too late. It'd basically peaked.

A From that point on, that was the peak.

T That was like them ringing and saying, 'We've got a record flood'.

A Get to higher ground, but it had already happened.

T We know that. We had snakes all in the house, we had every bit of wildlife around here.

A I stepped on a snake, I grabbed a snake, there was one in the bookshelf. I was looking in the bookshelf with a torch, thinking I might sit in bed and read a book. I put my hands in to grab a book and grabbed a little snake. And I was going to walk up the stairs there, and there was one at the bottom of the stairs and I stepped on it and thought 'What was that' and got the torch out and here was this snake with its head up at me.

T There was another one upstairs. It was like Noah's Ark. The noise was deafening. Honestly I've never heard

A Crickets

T from everything

A the birds

T The amount of wildlife that had come up to this little dry island. Frogs and toads and you name it, but it was, you nearly had to put your fingers in your ears, that's how loud it was.

A I still to this day I don't know how the children slept through it because the noise from everything was just

T You had to hear it to believe it. It was still pouring. A metal roof. You'd think that'd be the dominant sound but it literally was the wildlife and everything was trying to get in. It was crazy. So we knew without council's help, we knew it was pretty high.

A So that was the point we said 'Alright we're not going back to bed'. We were worried because the rain hadn't stopped, we were worried about landslides, obviously this house is built into the hill, so I was having internal panic attacks about the house sliding down (laughs) or something. That was something that was never going to happen but

T There was erosion everywhere, that hill, all that's fallen down. There was erosion happening everywhere so it was a real possibility that under here, which is just on stumps

A Clay

T could've just gone away because the water's never been up that high here, ever since they've built it so we were unsure whether this was going to slip

A So we basically had the kids' gumboots lined up at the front door, ready to grab them and go up the cattle trail to the water tank, because the trail goes up behind this house to the water tank.

T There's one exit strategy but you didn't want to be doing it unless it's life or death. It's all on foot

A Through torrential rain

T And that would get you up to around the back of the helipad, so you'd go out here and up around the back. We sat up and

A Put the generator on to see if we could get the news channel on

P Why didn't you have internet?

A We have satellite here so as soon as you have heavy rain, you can't get anything anyway. If you go onto the next day when we hooked all the internet up to the generator in the hope that something would come on, but there was nothing until the very small section the following day when we got in contact with our boss.

T For about 40 minutes. So the next day we sat up all night

A It slowly started to drop.

T I was able to get across this floodway on foot which was probably a bit dangerous because of crocs but

P Right up this far?

T Oh yeah, they come out of the Daintree. They just float up with the water level. They end up everywhere, just down there, just behind us, I had to check out our house and our stuff and saw that it was all gone, trashed, fridges over, freezers over, food everywhere, everything that wasn't,

A We were well stocked.

T anything that wasn't bolted down had floated up. Everything out of the shed had floated. It either wedged in the corner of the shed or floated off. We'd been prepared from the other floods and we'd put everything in those big plastic tubs. The kids shoes, our clothes, all of them washed away. So if it wasn't in a drawer, and being the drawer they all got ruined, but every pair of boots we had, shoes, all in the plastic tubs, just gone.

A We actually found a plastic tub in a tree last week with one shoes.

T One of my \$200 boots with no sole.

But most of it's probably ended up out in the ocean, but it was all gone. After I saw that was gone, I came up and told Alicia that our fears were confirmed. We lost all our stuff. We turned on the generator in the hope that, because the rain had backed off, we thought maybe we'll get some satellite. For 40 minutes we had nothing, just a red light on the internet, no internet and all of a sudden it went green. In that split second we grabbed the phone, we rang our boss and the owner of the property Roger Allen. And he was in Port Douglas at the time which was unusual because he's not up here very often.

P Where's he live?

T Manly but he works a lot overseas so it was actually (*Pam coughs*). No one had any idea apparently down there what was going on from what we could gather.

P In Port Douglas.

T Yeah. They were shocked at how bad it was happened up here. An hour and a half up the road if that. So (*Pam coughs*) he got onto the police there, SES

A He couldn't get in contact with the SES. He was going through all the different channels trying to get in contact with them and he ended up contacting a friend of his who runs Nautilus (*Pam coughs*) and he was trying to get us a charter to get us out of here because he was worried about the kids obviously. We didn't have really much food left at all at that stage because all of it had flipped out of the freezers and fridges. We felt we were pretty well prepared. We'd been trapped in here prior to that for a week and a half with the Boxing Day floods so we were pretty well prepared and well stocked because we knew there was another flood coming, but we didn't obviously expect anything like that.

10.39

He was trying to get us out of here.

T He was having breakfast at the time with the local radio station DJ, owner, manager I'm not sure what his title actually was. And so apparently it all

A spiralled

T spiralled I guess from there. With the assistance of the radio station, they tried to get people up here help. So in a way it was, and we lost the internet, we had the internet for about two minutes to actually make that call. We would've had no other way of contacting anyone for god knows how long.

A Because the phone lines were all knocked down.

T The whole of Telstra, all their mobile services, not that we get mobile here anyway, in the whole village got wiped out. So no-one had any mobile reception. So that's why after the chopper flew over, when we were in the chopper it was flying over every other property in the valley from the air surveying if there was anyone in distress. So the chopper did a big sweep of the valley too.

A We got an amazing view.

P How did the chopper arrive in the end, was it Nautilus?

T No.

A It was an unplanned SES stop off. They said they were just flying over basically doing a check of everyone.

P SES or Ergon?

A SES and they were flying over and they saw that we had a helipad up there and landed on the helipad and came down to the house. They knew we were here. Someone had got in contact with them and they knew we were here but we were told they couldn't come and get us because of the weather that was coming, and everything like that. Apparently they stopped, because we had the helipad for them to land on I think they said, there was a safe spot for them to actually land and then when they came down and they knew that we had internet, we were trying to get the internet up so they could check the radar.

T They were really concerned about even flying out of here at that stage so they were desperately trying to get onto our internet to see what was coming. How they actually found out we're not sure. Whether it was from the radio station or the police. Did we get a, what did we get saying

A We got a text message at some point where the internet must've popped back on at some point and I think it was just saying 'We're aware you are there but we're unable to get there'.

T They weren't coming. They said they weren't coming. They said 'We know you're there but we're not coming, you're going to have to stick it out'. And then obviously the internet disappeared again so that's all we had, so we thought oh well, they're not coming, and then about an hour or so later the chopper's hovering above the house and we're thinking

A We weren't prepared for them.

T No.

A We've gone down to the farmhouse and we're trying to get pastas out of the top of the pantry that haven't got washed away and setting up generators thinking that we're going to be here for days before anybody got to us.

T We were surprised that they were there and he said he had sent another message that they were on their way and I said we didn't get it. It came days later when we got coverage back. So we felt, I don't know, I did, a little bit embarrassed. Like we were just not prepared. If we knew they were coming we would've had everyone at the helipad ready to go but they had to land, and they had to walk around here and come up to the house and as we said, tried to look at the internet but it was gone and then said, I was going to stay with the dog but I didn't believe they would take the dog which would be understandable but

they said they would have a better idea when they got in the air but they said 'When you see how much water there is, you won't be getting out of here for weeks'.

A And we didn't have enough fuel.

T We didn't have anywhere enough fuel and no food, the water was contaminated. They were great. They said 'Bring the dog'. We all jumped on. Luckily they did get us out, we didn't get back for two weeks.

A And that monsoon that had gone to Townsville, they were predicting it was going to come back up, so when Tony was saying 'No I'll stay with the dog', it was really the chopper pilot that said 'No you need to come, because if that tuns around, you're going to be in here basically for weeks. If you don't come now, we can't come back to get you'.

So they basically talked us into going. They were absolutely lovely. They were amazing with the dog and the kids.

P How big was the helicopter?

A It was huge.

T it was a big chopper. I couldn't tell you how big it was but it could fit all us, so they took us to Mossman hospital because they had to

A Pick something up

T grab a satellite phone I think from Mossman hospital and if the weather was OK they were going to head back up and see if anyone else needed help. By no means were we like life or death. We weren't choppered out in the middle of the night, sitting on the roof of the house or anything like that. It wasn't like that. We were glad and lucky we were choppered out because as I said we were very low on supplies.

A We would've survived on plain rice and pasta and we had all of our plastic tubs. Tony found a whole bunch of plastic tubs in one of the sheds that we'd grabbed for the toys and he emptied them out and we collected rain water out the front, we would've survived. We would've had a good story of roughing it but we were more than happy to have gotten out of here. We were very lucky.

P When did they rescue you?

T It was about lunchtime the day after Australia Day, I don't know.

P Sunday.

T Australia Day was Saturday.

A Because we were supposed to have our welcome BBQ, that was one of the reasons that the boss was here. We were having, I'd forgotten all about that now, they'd organised a BBQ with all the local people to farewell the old managers Gaye and Graham and welcome us to the property and show everyone around again because they hadn't been up for years apparently. That was supposed to be what Australia Day was (laughs)

T Would've been about lunch time on Sunday, about 1 o'clock..

A It was in the afternoon.

T It was early arvo when we landed at the hospital and then Roger and Maggie, the owners of here drove out and picked us up from the hospital and kindly put us up in their shack down at Port Douglas, I'm being sarcastic, an amazing property which we felt very out of place.

A With our filthy mud -overed dog. We were there for two weeks. We ended up having to take, because Ryder started at the Daintree school but we still couldn't get home so we ended up commuting from Port Douglas for a week, taking him to and from school before we could even get home.

T All the roads were just a write-off. There were landslides everywhere.

A Our causeway was so high for weeks and weeks after. It's only just gone down now to no water at all over it in the last two weeks.

T week

A It's had water over it since Boxing Day.

T There's been a lot of water coming off the mountains.

P Tell me about the rivers that surround us here.

T We've got Niau Creek [*pron Nee ow*] which feeds Tranquility Falls

20.00

Obviously we've got the big one which is the Daintree, and running right through the property is Ellis Creek E double L I S, so we've got three water sources that feed right into Tranquility. Tranquility is the first property in the Daintree to flood we've been told, and the last property to clear. It's a very damp location especially at that time of year.

P And they met here, all those creeks.

T Yeah. They all

A feed down into the Daintree

T and that's pretty much at the front gate there. They all break their banks and yeah.

P What about your cattle?

T 237 cattle here at the time and we did not lose one. Not a single cow. So I guess the beauty of this property is

A high ground

T there's some very steep slopes that head up to the rainforest and the cattle must've learnt from the Boxing Day floods because during the Boxing Day floods when it got to about 14 and a half metres, there were cattle in all sorts of awkward positions on the property and stranded and swimming through water, but we did not see any of the cattle until we took off in the chopper and they were all up high.

And they were starting to come down. So they'd all gone right to the top. Didn't lose one.

So considering some other people on the road here, Upper Daintree Road, definitely lost cattle and there were cattle washed up everywhere as you would've heard, we were good. So that was a good thing.

P What do you think should happen to make it better for you, you need an earlier warning phone call

T Yeah obviously that was just one out of the box and may not ever happen again

A I really don't know what else. It's a natural disaster and people around here are used to floods. so as we said we were very prepared for a flood. We knew we were going to flood in. we'd had Boxing Day which was 14 and a half metres.

And one before that as well, so we prepped up to be stuck in for a week. We had enough food, the freezers were full, we had a bit of fuel because the Boxing Day one we didn't even lose power. So we had a little bit of fuel, would've got us through for a few days.

T But we weren't total novices to natural disasters. We'd been right in the middle of cyclone Debbie down at Cannonvale, Airlie Beach, a year or so prior, whenever it was.

A We've been in bushfires in Victoria.

T So we weren't totally, we had learnt quickly from the two floods we'd had since we'd got here and we'd picked the brains of pretty much everyone that we could, especially our neighbours Keith and Michelle who's lived here pretty much their whole lives.

P What's their other name?

T Reynolds. When people like that say there's not much you can do, you've just got to ride it out, all you can do is be as prepared as you can, and we were. We survived. (laughs)

P So now the big clean up.

T The clean up's been never ending because we've had two floods

A two majors since.

T because the ground's so wet, we've had 100mm of rain, everything, the causeway goes over, paddocks underwater, everything is just so wet, it can only rise, it doesn't drain away. It's been a very long process.

A It's been a tough process, it's two steps forward, one step back.

P You got mould.

A This is a brand new cupboard that I cleaned four days ago that I cleaned the dust off it and I went down to grab something out of the box this morning and it's covered in mould, the last few days the humidity's come up again, the rain we've had. The lounge is just wrecked, were just waiting for the wet season to finish to we can get rid of it. The mould's up the walls, everything is just continuous.

P What do you use to get rid of it?

A Vinegar, water, we had mould issues on Magnetic Island in our house and we had professionals come in and tell us not to use anything but vinegar. They said 'Don't use bleach, it just changes the colour of it and feeds the mould spores'.

T These are professionals, clean up crew.

A So that's why I smell like a bottle of vinegar just now because I just vinegared the BBQ for the fifth time this season. It's exhausting.

T The mould, it's never ending.

P Neat vinegar.

A Yeah.

P I've seen the lodge, the little house down there, how far was the water up the wall?

T About half a metre towards the front of the house and about three quarters at the back.

A The kids rooms were the highest because there was no drainage.

T It went up higher there.

A Their rooms were the worst. There was still water in them two or three days later. There was a foot of water that we were trudging through.

T It wasn't just water unfortunately. Septics and all that.

P Tell me about going back in there.

T It was horrendous. I had that quick look just before we were evacuated, I was hoping when i got down there, because it had only been 8 hours, the food would be fine because everything had flipped over and food wasn't fine and in the process of staring at all that, wondering what I was going to do, the chopper started hovering over the house so we had to get out. Coming back two weeks later to the house full of septics that had overflowed and the food, the smell of the food was horrendous. It was horrible, really was. I've never smelt anything like it. Don't want to smell it again. Because as Alicia touched on, because we'd been to two floods previous and because there was still plenty of weather around, we'd stocked up freezers, really big shopping trips. Spent a lot of money to be prepared.

A We've lost a lot of money since we've been here.

T We got two little grants, we got a grant of about \$1000, I can't remember under what title. And then we got one about four thousand was basically for people that didn't have contents insurance after these sorts of things.

29.59

P And you didn't have it.

T No not even the owner of the property who has a lot of stuff, and he had a lot of stuff down at the other house too, even he couldn't get it, even with brokers and the like, all he could get here insurance-wise was \$20,000 for contents but no flood cover (laughs) so he didn't get it obviously. There's no insurance.

P What about the car you lost?

A The car got covered, that was the only thing.

T We had full insurance on the car so we did get that back eventually. It took them forever because of the roads.

A It was probably over a month before

T It hasn't been that long ago that finally the car got dragged away.

A they couldn't get into the property to get it. We had to drag the car out with our other ute and tow it across the overflowing causeway. That was another heart attack in itself.

P But you still love living here.

A/T Yeah.

T We do it's

A We're crazy.

T We've said that many times. Given that it's been a pretty tough start.

A Look out that window, it's just amazing.

T We've never felt more at home. The kids love the school. Apparently they were taking bets after the new flood that the new family will be leaving.

A I think they're still taking bets now (laughs)

T The old manager Graham made a joke with them at the time, and he said there's no way known they'll be leaving.

A He said 'I saw the truck that they arrived with, there's no way they'll be packing that again'. Then after this flood he said 'It'd be the cheapest time ever to move (laughs). They wouldn't have a truck to pack'. It's been a very big roller coaster. A lot of emotion. Been very very hard but at the same time, we have no desire to leave yet. It's just all lessons, isn't it.

P It's going to stop raining one day.

A That's it. For 9 months of the year it's the perfect paradise to live in. Everywhere you live, there's a bad season. We lived in Victoria for how many years and we couldn't stand every winter. The black ice and the sleet (laughs) so it doesn't matter where you live, there's going to be extreme weather of some sort. You just have to try and learn a lesson from all of it and prepare ourselves.

T We were just unlucky that a month after we move here, we get the biggest flood on record and lose all our stuff. One of the few properties that actually did go under. There's a chopper pad here because when the property was built about 1993 by a Japanese corporation, they put a chopper pad in to fly their executives from Cairns airport to this retreat. So

A It was a retreat they built for their executives that they'd bring over.

P Has it ever been used apart from that?

T Occasionally some chopper flights come up from Cairns for people to visit the waterfall. We haven't had that experience. We haven't had anyone since we've been here in December. The chopper company did contact us recently.

A Someone off a cruise wanted to fly up to the waterfall.

T So there was potential there for that to happen but the waterfall tracks are decimated at the moment due to the floods and the amount of timber that has come over Tranquility Falls.

P Is that part of your job to clean it up?

T Yeah it will be. It is. It's just on the to do list. (laughs)

A We've got a very big To Do list at the moment.

T The falls were open to the public for a small fee to come in, to spent a day and have a picnic and everything up there but since Australia Day we've had to shut them down because it's just not safe up there at the moment. But hopefully once it dries out a bit, in

conjunction with the CFA, we'll do a burn up there and reclaim the tracks a bit. CFA are going to come in a couple of weeks and check it all out and once it's all cleaned up, we'll be up and running again. That's more just, the old managers set up that sort of program for the public to come in. a lot of people have still been turning up thinking it's still open. A bit disappointed when they see it's not.

A People are still coming up.

T People are still ignoring signs which is not good, public liability, it is dangerous up there at the moment, so they shouldn't be doing it. Yeah

P Describe the road into here, it's quite a long way, how far are you from Daintree Village?

T 893 metres to the front gate.

P That's your rural number.

T That's how they get here, it's the metres. Nearly nine kilometres from Daintree Village. We're the last property on this side of the Daintree river. South side.

P And then there's the CREB track.

T CREB track's just across the river there..

P Do you get notifications from Bairds Crossing. There's a camera there.

A I don't know if there's a camera there. I think that got wiped out a long time ago.

T When it's working, and if we can get onto the internet, we can see updates when they update it. It doesn't seem to be updated anywhere near as frequently as some of the other points and then during the most recent flood four weeks ago, I think the calibration was all wrong because it was telling us we could get back to our, we got trapped out during the last flood.

A That was the one before the last one.

T There's been so many.

A We got trapped and it was telling us we could come home, and we came to come home and we sat on that road for three hours and the road was still well over. So we had to turn around.

T Took accommodation in town. That was because it wasn't working properly at Bairds.

A Bairds was saying it was well under.

T But since we've been here and since this has all started, it really seems to be a very unreliable update. And very inconsistent. Look at other spots are getting updated all the time. 6pm we'll look at Bairds and it hasn't been updated since 11am and things like that. So it's just, there's no accuracy there at all. It didn't appear but we're still waiting.

P Is that council?

T I have no idea.

A We look on the BoM site.

T Yeah that's were looking but where they're getting it from, I don't know.

P You lose your internet when it rains?

T If it's heavy.

P And the television?

T Yeah.

A Because everything here's satellite, you can't get anything but satellite being this far out.

P Are you on NBN?

A It's NBN satellite.

P Fixed wireless.

A It was something that Graham and Gaye set up a year to two ago. It's a new government funded NBN satellite for rural properties.

T For properties that can't get the hard wired NBN isn't it.

A Any sort of NBN. Can't get any internet other than satellite. Because I don't think they even had internet out here prior to that.

P You can't get mobile?

A No. so the internet is very very handy because they have all these wonderful apps now where you do internet calling so that was the only way we got in contact with people.

P Skype or VOIP?

A it was on WhatsApp, an internet call ,which is the only form of eternal interaction we had. So that was great. That WhatsApp has come in very handy for us up here. It's our only form of contact. Basically all the phone lines up here get a bit soggy because as soon as we get too much, in every flood they've taken a few days to dry out.

T After we flood, for a few days.

P So you lose your landline.

T Yeah. Seems to be after it's happened.

A Once everything soaks into the ground or something.

P This has been quite an amazing story. I'm amazed you're still smiling.

A There's been a lot of tears and a lot of tantrums.

P Your kids haven't been too worried they lost their toys?

A It's probably only recently, the two younger ones, the two girls seem to be more affected, bring up the flood quite often when they talk about, We had this, we had this and then it flooded. They lost their toys, DVDs, books, all their books were gone.

T They had a great library of books and they lost everything from Christmas, being so close to Christmas .

A They lost everything.

T The Community Centre in Port Douglas were really good to us. The ladies there, I really have to drop in and say thank you again too.

A They gave the kids a big box of toys that they had left over from the Christmas drive, so they had plenty to play with while we were in Port Douglas.

T We had the Red Cross and the State government representatives come out here just after we got back into the house. They'd actually been here before we had. There was a sign posted on the door to give them a call when we got back in. I think they'd been here the day before in 4WDs and they got in. that's after the Australia Day flood, the big flood, two weeks after. And we called them and they were in the region obviously checking out if everyone was OK.

40.54

And they came here and sat here at the table like you are, and we told them what's happened and they did a big itinerary of all the stuff we've lost, beds, linen, everything, clothes, shoes, everything. They were very thorough, they were here for a couple of hours, we went through everything with them. They said 'We'll definitely be able to help you out with replacing...'

A basically more than anything for the essential items like the chest freezers and things you need to live up here. All the beds and things like that.

T We hadn't heard from them since up until a few weeks ago, it was a bit of a long story but someone ended up ringing me and said 'Where's the Daintree?', had no idea where the Daintree was, said that they were looking after Townsville flood victims and don't know why they were passed on our details. Asked me to explain the story which I did again and then said 'Well where have you been living since this happened if you've lost anything?' And I explained that we were living in our actual work place which is the holiday lodge. They

said 'We're taking you off the care list, you're basically OK'. Which technically I guess is correct but it was pretty disappointing.

A We're very lucky that our employer is putting us up when he's not making any income off the property, so if the time came tomorrow when he said I'm really sorry I can't afford to do this any more', we would literally have nothing.

T We wouldn't have a thing. I was not very happy with the way all that was handled. There's a lot of things that weren't handled very well. I think given that Townsville got hit by the flood a week after us or whenever it was, obviously that took priority and that was big news, just because of the volume of people. Army helping people out, people getting skip bins out the front of their house. We got no assistance, no-one helping us clean anything out.

A We couldn't throw things out just because they got mould on them. We had to scrub and try and save as much as we could.

T In saying that, there were certain things we potentially could've saved but we thought because of health, the implications and all that, we'll get rid of it, because Red Cross are going to help us get some of this stuff back. They'd taken lists from us including kids beds.

A And they told us we can't keep any of that stuff because it's contaminated.

T Then to get that call and say we've taken you off the list

P Is this Red Cross or State government list?

T Red Cross on behalf of a program called Give It. In our case they won't Give It.

A There was a lot of conversations with the State government. I think there was a group of different companies that they dealt with. We were told there was a program that they had somewhere, house (?) or seconds, seconds stuff like fridges so when stuff like this happens, they just got shipped to the people that needed it. What happened with all of that I have no idea. Maybe it all got lost.

T I was told they were basically doing me a favour by not giving us stuff because when she finally worked out, and this was a manager, where the Daintree was, she said 'Oh no, we only deliver as far as Cairns so you'd have to come and get it anyway, so it's sort of doing you a favour'. I was nearly speechless to her. We did not seek any assistance, we did not ring anyone for help but when people are here offering assistance, it felt good that there were people that. We've given to charities over the years, it felt good that when the time has come, there is a thing that you've always seen on the news and never pictured being in, we thought it's nice that we're going to get that help. Humbling a bit that people are going to donate stuff to you. But then to be told the exact opposite six weeks later, it was like a bit of a kick in the guts. I did send off an email to council in regards to clean up here and they have offered to send a truck up with some guys to assist with it because

A it's just too much for us to get to the tiny little tip in Daintree.

T It's a tiny transfer station that's open 8 hours a week. One afternoon a week and one morning.

A Wednesday afternoon for a few hours and Saturday morning for a few hours and for the most of this wet season, those days, we haven't been able to get out of the property.

T We can't get across the causeway so it's just been contaminated stuff here. I don't think there's an easy answer to it but we were told early on that all the skips were sent to Townsville to help them out.

A That was the only thing we requested. When everything happened, we asked obviously because we were cleaning out an entire house, if we could have a skip delivered to help us get it out basically. And it took ages for them to get back to us and then we were told

all the skips were sent down to Townsville. They gave us 40 free tip passes, it was an estimate.

T The lady at council has been good, don't want to imply any way, make out that they haven't been helpful. They've tried their best. There's been limitations logistically even if they did have a skip, getting it here, so we would've had to wait quite a while anyway. It was just more, the whole thing's been, it's a hard enough thing to go through and just to be promised all this help and it seems like, we've probably all been guilty of at times, 'We're here to help you, give us a call'. Then very quickly you're not. And then to be told weeks afterwards, you're not just forgotten but you're off the list, it's like 'What did we do wrong?'

P You told the truth and said you had somewhere to live.

T That's exactly right. As I said before, we totally understand, strictly speaking we are not in dire need. We have a roof over our heads but that was pointed out to me.

A All the unlucky stuff but we're very lucky that we have the employers we have because probably a lot of other people would've shut down and had nowhere to go, so in some ways we've been very lucky and in some ways we've been extremely unlucky.

P Might be a worth a call to your MP because if the State government said you were going to get it and then you didn't, cause a bit of a stir.

A We like living out here because we don't like a stir. As much as you would love to, I don't know, you don't, I was sitting here when they were doing their list thinking, I'm a stubborn person, thinking 'I'm sure there's people that are worse off' and it took her looking at me saying 'It's not, you've lost everything you have'.

T The lady was in tears because when we were explaining all the kids stuff and the kids were sitting there in their undies and didn't have any shoes, she was literally in tears. She said 'No, no, we are going to help you'. They went through all the paperwork right here on the desk and went through everything, it just felt, a slap in the face. It's a strange thing, you can't really argue with it, there probably is more people down in Townsville that, I don't think they would've been worst affected but didn't have the luxury if you want to call it that, of having somewhere else to go. But I think most people there would have the ability to get insurance. And would probably be getting everything back and probably in the meantime they're getting all this stuff from these charities. Whereas we couldn't get insurance and yeah.

P I think it would be worthwhile ringing the woman who was in tears.

T We didn't get their names.

P What about the note on the door?

T Don't have it. It was just a piece of paper. Wish we still had it. There was an older lady from the Red Cross, and a man and a woman from

P I know the lady from the Red Cross in Mossman so if you want, I'll give you her

T It's a hard one because in a way I would like to express, it was disappointing, but then you look back at the practicality side of it and if they said 'We'll get you a fridge, well there's a fridge here' so we'd be taking it from someone else.

P You'd be taking it from someone else.

T The lady did say on the phone if something happens with your employment, and I do have her number, she said to call her. Like if you lose your employment then you'll get back on the list. It was just one of those things, didn't need that phone call at the time.

P If it takes that long to get something happening, your employer might say 'I've got someone coming in two weeks'.

T That's right.

A Hopefully that doesn't happen. (laughs)

T You never know given the last few months.

A We haven't had the best run of luck, but anyway

P It's been a very good story, thanks for sharing.

A The sun's coming out.

P I feel very sorry for you.

A Don't.

P You're very brave people, very capable.

T We got through, the kids are all good and that's all that matters, we're OK. It's just stuff.

P It's just stuff. Thanks very much for talking. I'll turn this off, but you'll think of something else, I know.

53.23

THE END