



## Swan Hill Rural City Council Community newsletter – Saturday 19 November 2022

This newsletter is for communities in Victoria. Flood impacts vary along the Murray River between NSW and Victoria. For information and warnings relevant to NSW, please check [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au). Always follow the instructions provided by your State's emergency services.

Showers and storms will extend through western and central districts during Saturday and into the east overnight into early Sunday. Severe thunderstorms with heavy rainfall and damaging winds are possible in the Mallee.

Broadly, this rainfall is forecast to be less intense than last weekend's rainfall, with totals of 10 to 20mm forecast for Saturday and isolated higher totals of 20 to 50mm possible with storms.

Water levels along the Little Murray River at **Fish Point** are steady. The Murray River at **Pental Island** has peaked and emergency services continue to monitor the situation.

Goulburn-Murray Water is monitoring the situation at **Lake Boga** closely and emergency services have undertaken proactive work to raise relevant levees at Lake Boga over the past week.

Some of the outflows from Third Marsh down the Avoca Floodway have been diverted into the Mystic Park Forest to reduce flows into Lake Boga, where levels are expected to rise.

Lake Boga has now reached 87.8% capacity, up from 81.9% in October. Should Lake Boga reach full capacity (supply level), Goulburn-Murray Water in consultation with Swan Hill Rural City Council will consider whether the lake needs to be closed so that erosion and boating safety issues can be negated. Transport Safety Victoria Maritime Branch facilitates these closures.

The Murray River at **Swan Hill** peaked at the moderate flood level (4.60m) around midday on Tuesday 8 November and is currently at 4.59m, with near moderate flooding. The Murray River at Swan Hill is likely to remain above the minor flood level (4.50m) for the next few days.

Crews are monitoring the levee at **Wood Wood** and undertaking levee works as needed to protect several properties.

North of **Piangil**, a number of sink holes have begun to appear within the area, particularly on



busier roads. Emergency services are working closely with the Department of Transport to prevent, identify and repair issues where possible.

Work continues to maintain levees at low points along the south bound lane of the Murray Valley Highway between Stewart Road and Natya Road.

Significant breakout flows from Torrumbarry have spilled into the Wakool River, where river levels have peaked at Stoney Crossing.

These flows, combined with floodwaters from the Murray and Edward Rivers, caused major flooding higher than the 1975 flood at **Wakool Junction**, which peaked on 13 November at 11.73m.

People in **Kenley** should monitor current information via the [VicEmergency](#) mobile app or hotline **1800 226 226**. Please listen to your local [emergency broadcaster](#). Those planning to visit Kenley should make alternative arrangements.

Significant inflows from the Murrumbidgee River are contributing to major flooding along the Murray River at **Boundary Bend**, which reached 9.05 metres around 1pm on Saturday, higher than the 1975 flood event.

The Murray River at **Euston** (Robinvale) may peak near 10.10m (51.94m AHD) over the weekend, with moderate flooding.



At **Robinvale**, sandbags have been strategically placed and large rubber balloons are being placed in pipes and inflated to minimise the chance of river water flowing back into town via the drainage system.

Four high-volume pumps are in place and any excess water is being pumped over the levee into the river as part of a joint operation between VICSES, Swan Hill Rural City Council and CFA.

Construction of an additional levee between Higgins Road and McLennan Drive in Robinvale has been completed.

Emergency services have been working on levee construction and sandbagging at **Wemen**.

Storages are full and releasing water. Catchments are saturated following recent rainfall and rivers are likely to respond quickly to further rainfall.

People in areas prone to flash flooding should monitor local conditions and call **132 500** if sandbags are required, or if your home has flooded or is about to flood.

### **Drop in sessions**

A third drop in session will be held at the Wemen Store, on Thursday 24 November from 2pm to 3.30pm. Sandbags will be available for at-risk community members.

### **Drinking water**

Lower Murray Water advise that people may notice discolouration in their water due to blackwater within the Murray River. Please be assured that your urban water remains safe to drink and is tested to comply with Australian Drinking Water standards.

However, due to poor raw river water quality, treatment plants are taking longer to bring water to standards, so **please conserve water** where possible due to the current treatment challenges.

### **Wellbeing, recovery and support**

It is normal to have strong emotional and physical reactions following a distressing event. Support is available to help you recover.

You can call the **Flood Recovery Hotline** to access a range of services including mental health and wellbeing support. The recovery

hotline is open from 7.30am to 7.30pm every day. Call **1800 560 760** and press 9 if you require an interpreter.

To find out more about recovery support for people affected by the 2022 Victorian floods, go to: [www.vic.gov.au/2022-flood-recovery](http://www.vic.gov.au/2022-flood-recovery)

Remember, there is always help available via:

- Your GP or local mental health professionals
- [Lifeline](http://www.lifeline.org.au) 131 114
- [Beyond Blue](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) 1300 224 636
- [MensLine](http://www.mensline.org.au) 1300 789 978
- [Kid's Help Line](http://www.kidshelpline.org.au) 1800 55 1800
- [Parent Line](http://www.parentline.org.au) 13 22 89

### **Online interactive map**

View the map at [www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/flood-maps](http://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/flood-maps) to check if you are in an at-risk area and see where levees are located. People north of Piangil to Boundary Bend should use the *Mid Murray 1% AEP Flood* layer for an indication of where floodwaters may reach, and those around Robinvale and Wemen should use the *Mid Murray 2% AEP depths (m)* layer.

Actual flooding observed will differ from that shown. We encourage all people in at-risk areas to develop a flood plan in response to this event.

**Wildlife** - if you see animals that appear injured or caught in flood water call **136 186** or download the **Wildlife Emergency App**.

### **Levee safety**

Be careful around levees. Prolonged water pressure on levees, like we are experiencing, can cause sections to collapse without warning. Please report issues with levees directly to VICSES or Swan Hill Rural City Council.

- Call VICSES on **132 500** to report emergency levee overtopping and breaches.
- Call Council to report other concerns with levees, such as low points or seepage.

### **Council contact details**

Phone (03) 5036 2333

<https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SwanHillCouncil/>

### **Sandbag distribution points**

People in at-risk areas should call **132 500** to request sandbags if your property is at risk of flooding or you require any other support.



### Financial assistance

- Rural Financial Counselling Service provides agricultural industries and small rural businesses with free, confidential and independent planning and support services. Call **1300 045 747** for assistance.
- To apply for a Victorian Emergency Relief Assistance Payment and understand eligibility criteria, [complete the online application form](#) at <https://emergencypayments.dffh.vic.gov.au>. To understand if you are eligible for Emergency Re-establishment payments call Flood Recovery Hotline **1800 560 760**.
- If you require assistance relating to insurance, please call the Insurance Council Australia's Disaster Hotline on **1800 734 621**.

### Road closures and travelling in the area

Numerous roads have been impacted and are closed. Updated information is available via **13 11 70** or <http://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/>

### Murray River closure

The Murray River is now closed downstream of Hume Dam to Nurtram Billabong (Hattah). This applies to all river users. No boats can enter the river and people cannot enter for recreational purposes such as fishing or swimming.

### Mosquito-borne disease

Mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria include the Ross River Virus, Barmah Forest Virus, Murray Valley Encephalitis (MVE) and Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV). MVE AND JEV can cause severe illness and death in some people. Your only protection against mosquitoes and the diseases they carry is to avoid mozzies bites:

- Cover up as much as possible - wear long, loose-fitting clothes.
- Use an effective mosquito repellent on all exposed skin.
- Prevent mosquitoes from getting inside by using fly screens on windows and doors.
- Use mosquito coils or insecticide candles in small, outdoor areas.

### Relief and recovery

- An Emergency Relief Centre (ERC) is established at the Swan Hill Basketball Stadium and is available 24 hours, 7 days. Phone: **0447 094 347**.
- People wanting a structural assessment of their property can register at

[www.vic.gov.au/register-structural-assessment-october-2022-floods](http://www.vic.gov.au/register-structural-assessment-october-2022-floods)

**Rural Aid** provides farmers with support, including confidential counselling, fodder, domestic water, financial assistance and by providing access to volunteers through Farm Army – register [online](#) at or call **1300 327 624**.

**Agriculture Victoria** is assisting landholders with agricultural relief needs – with a priority on addressing urgent animal welfare issues. Support is available for flood-affected farmers:

- **Primary Producer Recovery Grants:** Up to \$75,000 grants to cover the cost of recovery and get businesses up and running again.

*Note: This replaces the \$10,000 Primary Producer Flood Clean-Up, Relief Grants announced on 19 October. Producers that received a Primary Producer Flood Clean-Up Relief Grant of \$10,000 can now apply for up to a further \$65,000 under the Primary Producer Recovery Grant, bringing the total to \$75,000.*

- **Rural Landholder Grants:** Up to \$25,000 grants to cover the costs of disaster impacts for small-scale producers.
- **Primary Producer Concessional Loans:** Up to \$250,000 to restore or replace damaged equipment and infrastructure, or to cover the short-term business expenses.
- **Primary Producer Transport Subsidies:** Up to \$15,000 to support the transport of emergency fodder or stock drinking water, and the movement of livestock.

For further information on managing crops and livestock after a flood, budget feed plans, and other support and assistance, please contact the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226**.

### Health and safety

- Floodwater is toxic - **never play or swim in floodwater**. Wear protective clothing when cleaning up. Infectious diseases including gastrointestinal infections and Hepatitis A can spread from contact with contaminated floodwater. A small cut can easily get infected and make you very sick.
- Be aware of **hazardous trees** in the area resulting from soft ground, erosion of roots on levee banks and high winds.



- **Snakes** look for shelter and food in flooded areas. Be careful around houses and sheds near floodwater. Call DELWP on 136 186 for advice on snake controllers in your area. If someone is bitten, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.
- **Mould** poses a risk to health, growing in damp and poorly ventilated areas. The risk of mould being present in your home after flooding is high.

**Blackwater** is water with little or no oxygen in it. It is usually dark in colour due to the breakdown of plants and other organic matter. Blackwater can harm or kill fish, crayfish and other river creatures.

- River managers and scientists monitor water quality issues and are working to reduce the impact of blackwater where they can, but the scale of the current flooding means water quality will not improve quickly.
- Any fish death event in Victoria should be reported to EPA **1300 372 842**. Any fish death event in the Murray River should be reported to Fisheries **1800 043 536**.

#### **What is the impact of blackwater on livestock?**

- Contamination can cause the water to be temporarily unpalatable to livestock.
- Contaminated water is not usually poisonous to healthy livestock but may harm young or weak livestock.
- Livestock with access to fresh water or trough water would rarely be tempted to drink blackwater.

#### **Managing contaminated stock water**

Visually inspect water supplies for debris, dead stock, smell and odour. If the water supply has not been affected, no further action is required.

If the water supply has been contaminated by flood water, remove any floating debris and dead animals and calculate how many days of water you have available:

- What are your daily stock and dairy water requirements?
- How much good quality water (if any) is available in storage? Start using water saving strategies to make the limited resource go further.

Identify alternative sources of good quality water you might have access to. This might be:

- Another dam or channel that's not contaminated

- Groundwater that's not contaminated
- A neighbour's bore or dam – check with your Water Corporation before using this supply.

If possible, empty the dam water to pasture and refill with a clean water supply, such as a channel. For further information, and guidance on water testing, go to [agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/emergency-management/floods/managing-contaminated-livestock-water](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/emergency-management/floods/managing-contaminated-livestock-water).

**Asbestos** can be found in fibre cement sheeting and pipes, vinyl floor tiles, electrical parts and roof materials. It is not always possible to tell if a material contains asbestos by looking at it. If you are disposing of flood-related waste and are in any doubt whether it might contain asbestos:

- Do not disturb the material
- Prevent others from disturbing the material.

We recommend you use a licensed asbestos removalist to clean-up. They know how to remove and dispose of asbestos safely, without risk to you and your neighbours. If you are using a contractor to remove asbestos, they must be licensed by WorkSafe Victoria.

If you're considering doing the clean-up yourself, follow advice available for homeowners at [Asbestos Victoria](http://www.asbestos.vic.gov.au), including the asbestos identification tool: <http://ow.ly/imOt50LiLQY>.

#### **Used sandbag disposal**

- Clean sandbags: Residents can keep clean and dry sand for reuse at their residence.
- Smelly or visually contaminated sandbags can be disposed of at the Swan Hill Landfill free of charge.
- Always wear gloves when handling used sandbags and other flood-related waste. Go to [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au) for more information.

#### **Returning home after a flood**

For information on actions to take when returning home from a flood and other relief information visit <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief>

*To access this information in other languages call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call VicEmergency Hotline. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech/communication impairment contact National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 and ask them to call the VicEmergency Hotline.*