



Swan Hill Rural City Council Community newsletter – Saturday 29 October 2022

Floodwaters from the Campaspe and Goulburn Rivers combined with flows down the Murray River have caused major flooding at Echuca and Moama where the river level peaked around 94.98m AHD Wednesday night with major flooding, higher than the October 1993 (94.77m AHD) and November 1975 (94.80m AHD) flood peaks.

As this flood peak extends downstream, major flooding is possible along the Murray River at Swan Hill, which is likely to exceed the minor flood level (4.50ms) late Saturday into Sunday.

On Wednesday afternoon, the BOM revised the forecast for when the Murray River at Swan Hill may reach the Major flood level (4.70 metres). This has been delayed roughly a week, from the first week to now the second week of November, around the 8th to the 11th. This gives the rural communities around Swan Hill and further downstream more time to prepare.

This may be similar to the October 1993 flood event, however no two floods are the same.

Expect further changes to forecasts for Swan Hill and downstream, which will be refined once the upstream flood peaks along the Murray River and its tributaries are observed.

Emergency services are monitoring floodwaters at Pental Island, Tyntynder, Beverford, Vinifera, Nyah and surrounding areas. Flood wardens with help of local land holders are constantly monitoring levees in the above areas for any breaches or identified low areas. The Swan Hill levee is not expected to be overtopped in this event. Emergency services will be door knocking at high-risk areas over the next few days.

As weather permits, ground crews and helicopters are being used to observe the flood extent and monitor the condition of levees and roads.

Further rainfall is forecast during Monday and Tuesday, which may cause renewed river level rises and flooding.

We need your help!

With the Rapid Relief Team finishing up in Swan Hill on Saturday, after a massive effort over the past few weeks to fill more than 70,000 sandbags with community support, we are asking people

once again to spare an hour or two on Sunday and assist with filling pallets of sandbags.

If you have some spare time, we will be filling pallets of sandbags from **9.30am to 5pm tomorrow** (Sunday) at the **Lake Boga Community Centre**. Please bring a shovel if you can, high visibility clothing (vest or shirt) and wear secure footwear (steel cap boots preferred) as there will be heavy machinery operating.

These filled sandbags are being laid by the thousand each day with the support of our friends from the ADF, and we need to keep up the supply to them so they can continue their great work.

There will be a community meeting held at the Community Centre at 12pm, followed by a BBQ lunch to say 'thank you' to all those who have turned out to help.

Additional sandbag collection points will be announced via local media and VicEmergency later in the week.

Community meetings

- **Lake Boga** – Lake Boga Community Centre – 12pm Sunday 30 October
- **Nyah** – Community Centre, Nyah Recreation Reserve – 2pm Sunday 30 October
- **Tyntynder and Beverford** – Beverford School – 3.30pm Sunday 30 October
- **Swan Hill** – Swan Hill Town Hall – 6.30pm Monday 31 October
- **Robinvale** – Community Arts Centre – 6.30pm Wednesday 2 November

Murray River closure

The Murray River is closed to river craft downstream of Tocumwal Bridge to Robinvale, after an emergency area was declared on 18 October due to the current flooding along the river.

People and boats are prohibited from entering the river between these locations. Anybody on the Murray between these points needs to leave the river.

The declaration of the emergency area applies to all residents on both sides of the border. Neither NSW or Victorian users are permitted on the river at this time.

Pop up stalls

These sessions were held by VICSES in conjunction with Swan Hill Rural City Council and the Catchment Management Authority to provide information to the community on forecast inundation mapping for the area and other important information to ensure people in at-risk areas can be prepared for potential floodwater impacts. Pop up stalls were held this week at Nyah, Piangil, Boundary Bend, Robinvale, Beverford, Pental Island and Lake Boga.

Reporting levee issues

Community flood wardens assist VICSES to prepare for floods – they are dedicated volunteers with local knowledge, across a number of locations within our region.

If you're not sure who your local flood warden is, you can report issues with levees directly to VICSES and 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.

This is the fastest way to get your information to the people who can act upon it.

Online interactive map

View the online interactive map at www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/flood-maps to check if you are in an at-risk area and see where levees are located.

Blackwater and blue green algae

Significant rainfall and flooding can cause water quality issues like low-oxygen (hypoxic) blackwater and blue green algae.

High levels of organic matter have been washed into waterways and combined with warm weather, can cause oxygen levels in the water to drop. This can harm or cause the death of fish and crayfish.

River managers and scientists monitor rivers for water quality issues and work to reduce the impacts of a blackwater event where they can. Low levels of dissolved oxygen are recorded at several locations across northern Victoria and in the Murray River.



The scale of the current flooding means water quality will not improve quickly. Any fish death event in Victoria should be reported to the EPA by calling **1300 372 842**.

Council contact details

Phone (03) 5036 2333

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

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

Your questions answered

Q: What are we expecting in Tyntynder?

A: The current BOM predictions for the rivers in this area are like those which occurred in 1993. The inundation that occurred during this event can be viewed on the online interactive map.

Q: Can the Swan Hill bridge choke pass the amount of water quick enough?

A: Based on the expected water levels at Swan Hill and available flood mapping, there does not appear to be any cause for concern at this location.

Q: Should those with sewage pipes under their properties have any concerns?

A: Customers of Lower Murray Water can report the issue by calling 1800 808 830. If residents have been inundated or look as if they will be impacted by flood waters, place a sandbag on the overflow relief gully (ORG) located toward the back of the property to prevent the sewerage system from backing up. If you have any concerns about sewerage on your rural property, please go to www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/sewage-overflows-at-home



Q: If the Little Murray River overtops it runs into El Alamein Avenue. With recent rainfall, we have had flooding in this street. We need more information.

A: It is possible that this area may be impacted. We are currently evaluating options and will be releasing information to assist people in this area.

Q: What is the status of the levee bank at Pental Island?

A: Emergency services have been working with the local flood warden to regularly inspect the Pental Island levee and ensure any necessary works are undertaken.

Q: How do all the rivers intersect and interact?

A: Flows in the Murray River are well defined for small floods when the streams operate within their banks and levees. In medium to large floods, however, the capacity of the channel is exceeded. This can cause levee failure at a number of locations and hence uncertainty in where flood flows will break out.

The flow in the Murray River at Swan Hill is influenced by several factors. These include:

- The floodplain slopes to the north (away from the River into NSW)
- Naturally, flow would break out to the north in moderate to large floods and join the Wakool River system, limiting the amount of flow (and hence flood levels) at Swan Hill.
- Between Barham and Swan Hill there is one major tributary inflow, the Loddon River, and numerous potential break-out locations on the New South Wales side. These are often blocked by private levees.
- Levees along both sides of the Loddon and Murray Rivers limit breakouts and increase flood flows and levels at Swan Hill.

In summary, flood flows at Swan Hill are influenced by the amount of water passing down the Murray River from upstream (around Echuca), the size of Loddon River peak and how much spills north into New South Wales.

Q: The levee bank near the pump station is being undermined and the pump station may go under if the levee breaches. Are authorities monitoring this levee?

A: Yes. These levees are constantly being monitored and remedial works are being undertaken. All critical infrastructure is being identified and strategies are being put in place to maintain their operation.

Relief and recovery

Assistance is available for community members whose homes have been impacted. An **Emergency Relief Centre (ERC)** has been established in Swan Hill at the Swan Hill Basketball Stadium (15 Gray Street) and is open 24 hours, 7 days.

If you need to seek support from the ERC and you are Covid positive, or suspect you may have been exposed, please consider wearing a mask and maintaining 1.5m distance from others, where possible.

Minor, moderate and major - what does it all mean?

Flood levels for Murray River at Swan Hill:
Minor 4.50 Moderate 4.60 Major 4.70

Minor

- Causes inconvenience, Water can spill over river banks into nearby low-lying areas.
- Water coming up through drains in streets.
- Require relocation of stock in some cases.
- Riverside camping areas and some low-lying caravan parks could be impacted.
- Covers low paths, tracks and bridges.
- Some back yards and outbuildings impacted below floor level.

Moderate

- Water spilling over river banks and covering larger areas of land.
- Water around floor level in some rural low-lying houses, sheds and buildings.
- Evacuation may be required in some areas.
- Impact to roads and traffic routes.
- Relocation of stock required in rural areas.

Major

- Widespread flooding, with some buildings inundated above floor level.
- Properties and whole areas may be isolated.
- Major roads and rail routes closed.
- Could require larger-scale evacuation.

Potential impact to utility services (internet, water, power, sewage).

If you decide to leave your home

- Ensure all heating/cooking appliances are turned off. There is a risk of fire if power is restored and there is no one at the property.
- Turn off all switches at the main electrical switchboard, including the Main Switch.
- Unplug your appliances and if you can, lift them up so they remain clear of floodwater.



- Turn your solar system off at the inverter and then turn off at the switchboard. The solar system will have information on shut down procedures.
- Make sure all LPG cylinders are closed (clockwise to close the valve) at the valve on top of the cylinder.
- Leave cylinders where they were installed. Do not move cylinders inside buildings or sheds. A damaged cylinder may leak creating a hazard. Do not disconnect any appliances unless the LPG cylinder is being relocated away from danger.
- LPG cylinders are buoyant and will readily float away in floodwater, creating a hazard downstream. It is essential that all LPG cylinders be restrained by tying them to a fixed structure using cables or strong ropes.

- **Primary Producer Transport Subsidies:** Up to \$15,000 to support the transport of emergency fodder or stock drinking water, and the movement of livestock.

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Facts about levees

A flood levee is an embankment usually alongside a river or creek designed to reduce the risk of flooding to properties. They are not designed to protect people. If a levee is in danger of failing, people at risk of being impacted by flooding may be advised to evacuate. It is important that you follow this advice.

Building or increasing the height of a levee can have significant consequences to surrounding areas. To ensure levees don't cause unexpected increases to flood risk, they must be well designed and maintained by experts.

What is **Overtopping**? A levee is in danger of overtopping when the height of the floodwater is

During a flood

- [VICSES](http://www.vicses.vic.gov.au) has lots of information to help you prepare. Go to www.ses.vic.gov.au
- Download the VicEmergency App and set a watch zone around your property. If you are unable to download the App, visit the VicEmergency website at www.emergency.vic.gov.au

Safety messages

- Do not drive through floodwater. Be aware of road hazards including mud, debris and damaged roads or bridges.
- Floodwater is toxic - never play or swim in floodwater. Wear protective clothing when cleaning up. A small cut can easily get infected and make you very sick.

Information for farmers

AgVic is assisting landholders with agricultural relief needs – with a priority on addressing urgent animal welfare issues. Farmers who have been impacted by floods and require assistance, please contact the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 or visit the [AgVic website](http://www.agvic.vic.gov.au).

Recent grant announcements include funding to support farmers and food producers as well as an investment in public health:

- **Primary Producer Clean-Up Relief Grants:** \$10,000 grants to cover the cost of the clean-up and get businesses up and running again
- **Primary Producer Concessional Loans:** Up to \$250,000 to restore or replace damaged equipment and infrastructure, or to cover the short-term business expenses.



higher than the height the levee is designed for. Overtopping is one of the most common reasons for floodwater entering properties behind a levee.

What is **Breaching**? A levee breaches when part of the levee fails, creating an opening that floodwater can get through. Breaches can be caused by a number of factors and can happen over a long period of time or very suddenly.

If you live near a levee and flooding is predicted you should:

- Listen to evacuation notifications. If a levee is in danger of failing you will be advised to evacuate. Remember that if a levee does fail there may be no time to evacuate. You must leave early.
- Never rely on a levee to protect you. Remember that levees are designed to reduce the risk of damage to property, not protect people, and no levee is flood proof.

School closures - information on updated school closures is available via the Dept of Education website: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/>

Plan and Prepare

- Keep an emergency kit – with enough for 3 days in an emergency.
- Food, water, protective gloves, masks, medications and prescriptions, first aid and personal hygiene items, a waterproof torch, toilet paper, chargers, battery powered radio, batteries, reading glasses, essentials for babies and pets, spare clothing, and comfort items, especially for children and people with a disability.
- Watch what is happening around you and activate your plan.
- Install the Red Cross Get Prepared Smart phone app and follow the steps or complete the Australian Red Cross RediPlan booklet at <https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare>

Take action to reduce impacts at your property

- Take action to reduce impacts at your property
- Keep gutters and drains clear of debris, outdoor furniture, toys etc.
- {Check your building and contents insurance. What type of flooding does it cover?
- Put your most valuable possessions up high, above possible floodwater height.
- Backup important files and documents to a USB kept elsewhere, or to cloud storage.

- Identify higher ground on your property or further away from the danger area.

Health

Nurse-on-Call on **1300 60 60 24** (this is a phone service that allows you to discuss any health-related issue with a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Victoria).

The recent floods in Victoria pose a risk of increased mosquito breeding. Mosquitos can carry a number of diseases that can make people very ill and, in severe cases, can even cause death. Simple precautions can help protect your community against mosquitoes and the diseases they may carry.

Infectious diseases including gastrointestinal infections and hepatitis A can spread from contact with contaminated floodwater.

Road closures - information on updated road closures is available via 13 11 70 or the VicTraffic website: <https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/>

Mental health

It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions following a distressing event. There is always help available through:

Your local doctor

Local mental health professionals

[Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au/) - 131 114

[Beyond Blue](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/) - 1300 224 636

[MensLine](https://www.mensline.org.au/) - 1300 789 978

[Kid's Help Line](https://www.kidshelpline.org.au/) - 1800 55 1800

[Parent Line](https://www.parentline.org.au/) - 13 22 89

Stay informed

www.emergency.vic.gov.au

- Road closures
www.traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au
- VicEmergency Hotline – free call
1800 226 226
- VicEmergency app
- Facebook or Twitter (#vicHAZARD)
- Local radio

To access this information in other languages call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 (free call) 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.