



Storms & Floods

Community Meeting – Q&A Fact Sheet

What support is available for people affected by the storms

After a storm or flood, sometimes people can be unsure of what to do next – and that’s okay. By contacting the **Storm and Flood Recovery Support Hotline** on **1800 560 760** you can be connected with a Recovery Support Worker, who can help you with practical, health and well-being support.

The Storm and Flood Recovery Hotline is a single state-wide number (1800 560 760) that Victorians impacted by the June 2021 storms and floods can call for help or assistance.

Operators can assist residents and property owners with registering for Clean-Up of structures on private property or accessing their own Recovery Support Worker, mental health and wellbeing support, financial counselling and information on available payments.

Who is fixing the entire creek through Walhalla?

This is a complicated clean-up effort and Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) is collating all the works along the creek to ensure that nothing is missed between all the agencies that have tenure over certain sections.

BRV is coordinating the multiple agencies and departments to plan for a clean-up approach that will manage the works, including removal of flood debris in the waterway, as a whole. This will be done in a way to minimise any impacts on businesses, tourism and the community, and make sure nothing is missed.

What’s the residential clean-up program I’ve heard about

The residential Storm and Flood Clean-Up program is fully funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments and is free to eligible property owners, regardless of whether they are insured or not. BRV is partnering with Johns Lyng group to undertake this program. Residents of BBSC are encouraged to apply. To find out more about the program, or check your eligibility, visit www.brv.vic.gov.au/cleanup.

Structures:

To be eligible for the residential clean-up program, the property must have been affected by the June 2021 storms and floods and contain structures – or buildings – that were destroyed or classified as being damaged beyond repair. The structures will be cleared and any resulting debris will be removed.

Hazardous Trees:

The clean-up program is also accepting registrations for hazardous trees. These are trees still standing on private property that were made hazardous because of the June 2021 storms.

A tree is in scope of the program if it's within falling distance of a **structure** or **access to a structure** (i.e. road or pathway). Once registered, these trees can be professionally assessed and recommendations made for their treatment.

Important safety information about hazardous trees:

Over the past month, our residential Storm and Flood Clean-up program has been receiving high volumes of registrations for the assessment of hazardous trees on properties, that pose a safety risk to residents.

We are working through these hazardous tree registrations and the site assessments and are seeing that works are done as safely and efficiently as possible.

Getting out to everybody with registered hazardous trees is a big job and it takes time.

While you wait for your assessment, or for an arborist to return, it's essential that you have a safety plan in place that includes alternative accommodation options if strong winds are predicted.

If you need support, call the **Recovery Support Hotline** on **1800 560 760** to speak to a dedicated local Recovery Support Worker who can assist.

Landslips:

Clean-up of landslip rubble on private property is eligible where it has damaged structures on the property, is preventing

access or egress to the residence, or where it presents a hazard to residents.

Who is going to help clean up the debris and landslips?

Landslips or debris that pose a threat to any structures or roads on private property can be addressed through the Residential Storm & Flood Clean-up Program. To arrange, please call the BRV Recovery Support Hotline on 1800 560 760. If the issue is on public land, then it is the responsibility of the department or council that manages it to clean-up.

Why did the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) not clean out the debris in creeks prior to storm?

Waterway management is a shared responsibility and the WGCMA doesn't manage waterways in such a way that debris is removed regularly. With over 40,000 km of declared waterways in the region they are managed for ecological health rather than along the lines of amenity value and flood prevention. We will of course, work with other entities to assist in and around meeting the objectives and needs of waterways in complex situations where floods impact private and public infrastructure.

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is project based funded and coordinates waterway management throughout the region. This is specifically done to support waterway health outcomes and is largely focussed on delivering projects to achieve this. The WGCMA does not own any land and therefore works in partnership to deliver projects.

How could this damage happen and why weren't we given warning?

We understand the event was quite extreme and as such created a lot of damage due to the power and energy of the floodwaters. The impact may have been amplified as a result of the debris load created by recent fires. Debris may have had an impact on some of the damage, but we won't know the full extent as floods are incredibly chaotic events. It is hard to predict where and when the damage will occur. To understand the local impact, it is important to understand the catchment.

Walhalla's creek flooded, can we flood-proof it?

It would be very challenging to floodproof Walhalla. However, understanding flood and flow dynamics and the impact from a range of perspectives will be useful for future planning. It is recommended that a future flood plan be developed by the community in collaboration with government agencies and be integrated with the Master Plan process.

What is the CMA doing to prevent future flooding of creeks?

Waterways are complex and highly dynamic natural systems. They serve many functions and are inevitably impacted during high flow events such as those we saw in June.

Subject to funding the WGCMA will undertake a flood recovery program which will repair damage to existing worksites, waterway health assets and new sites where damage from the recent event means there is a significant risk to waterway health.

What are council and state government doing to help the areas impacted by flood?

There have been crews on the ground from the start helping people, assessing impact and ensuring the steps to recovery are safe and measured.

Who is going to assess the bridges over the creek in Walhalla?

An assessment of the private bridges in the Walhalla township, including the bridge to the North Garden have been assessed and Council is awaiting the finalised report. These assessment reports will be made available to the relevant landowners and Council can confirm that the North Garden bridge is open to pedestrians.

What is the plan to advise the wider travelling public of what is happening?

From a Council perspective, we are committed to developing a longer-term communication plan to address this matter on all of our media platforms to compliment those of the other agencies.

Walhalla is a tourist destination. How is unauthorised camping and campfires going to be policed with no campgrounds currently open in Walhalla?

Now that the Local Law has been gazetted, Council's Infrastructure Maintenance team are assisting the Compliance team by erecting applicable signage once messaging details and locations are confirmed. Council, with the assistance of BRV are looking at erecting signage in Walhalla in the interim.

Community Compliance Officers will respond to complaints of unauthorised camping and campfires during business hours and will schedule patrols outside of business hours during peak seasons when required.

When might the road north of Walhalla reopen?

Works and repairs to the road north of Walhalla to Aberfeldy, are currently underway and should be completed and the road reopened by the end of next week.

Apart for obvious repair works, what is the plan to help our communities recover economically?

To best understand the economic and social issues resulting from this event – which we know is compounded by the 2019 bushfires and COVID – we would encourage the formation of a Community Recovery Committee where the community can come together to generate ideas, initiative and projects for recovery and to hear from each other to understand the priorities for a community led recovery.

Council has received funding from the State Government to engage a dedicated resource to work with businesses and industry to deliver events and projects to support tourism in consultation with community groups and other initiatives. Once the role has been filled, they are dedicated to the economic support of impacted towns after the recent event. They will work closely with the community and local businesses to identify opportunities and support both short and long-term economic stability and growth for the region.

Is there any support available for mental health and wellbeing?

We have representatives from Red Cross available to speak with you or anyone who needs support. You can also call the state-wide hotline on **1800 560 760** to be connected with a local support worker.

Are trees being cleared off roads?

To make roads safe, crews are working to clear any large trees that have fallen over the road, as well as remove debris from the roadside, restore road signs and check culverts/drains.

For the safety of the public and emergency crews, drivers need to pay attention to the road conditions and do not enter areas that are closed.

What is happening with tourists travelling to flood and storm-affected areas during upcoming holidays periods and weekends?

SES, CFA, ADF, FFMVic RRV and local council ground crews are working together to clear local roads and restore direct access to properties as well as open public areas (e.g. recreation reserves, forests, parks and tracks).

Baw Baw Tourist Road has been significantly damaged by 13 landslides and will be closed long-term. Access can be gained by using South Face Road.

For the safety of the public and emergency crews, drivers need to pay attention to the road conditions and do not enter areas that are closed.

Information for updated road closures is available on **13 11 70** or at VicTraffic's website **traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au**

What support is available for producers who were impacted by the storms?

Agriculture Victoria has a team in place to work with producers and industry following the recent storm event. Producers should get in contact if they have horticultural, livestock or other agricultural issues. Visit **agriculture.vic.gov.au** or call 136 186.