

# **Victorian towns wait for the inevitable**

**Karen Kissane**

*January 17, 2011*



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## **Worst of flooding still to come**

Charlton in Victoria's west has been cut off from electricity and despite an evacuation order many of its residents have decided to stay.

VICTORIA'S flood crisis will continue for days. Water levels in the border town of Echuca and further west at Horsham are due to peak today and tomorrow, and many small towns are expected to face inundation as creeks and streams swell with water moving downstream.

"The message to Victorians is that we are not out of the woods yet as far as this flood crisis is concerned," the state controller for the State Emergency Service, Trevor White, said. "In some of our river systems we are seeing unprecedented stream rises."

An emergency evacuation alert was issued to Echuca yesterday, as the Campaspe River continued to rise beyond the height forecasters had predicted. Mr White said large areas of the town would be flooded.



"We anticipate parts of the central business district and areas to the west of the Campaspe river in Echuca to be impacted," he said.

The mayor of Echuca, Neil Pankhurst, said the town's levee had been designed to withstand a one-in-100-year flood, which is dangerously close to what was expected there last night. "We believe it will hold," he said.

Horsham will be struck by the Wimmera River today and tomorrow, and emergency workers visited the most at-risk homes yesterday. "We anticipate around 500 properties will be affected," Mr White said.

Forty-three Victorian towns have now been flooded, affecting more than 1400 properties and more than 3500 people. Emergency services have received more than 5200 calls for help. They are the biggest floods in decades and in some areas are the largest ever recorded.

The Premier, Ted Baillieu, who visited Echuca and Carisbrook yesterday, said the crisis was one of the worst in the state's history and that the cost of repairing the damage would run into tens of millions of dollars.

As the water in the big rivers back up into creeks and streams, many smaller townships are bracing themselves. "Looking at the area between the Campaspe and the Loddon river, that is a very vast area there, and there are many smaller communities where we will see the impacts of flooding ... There will be vast tracts of land that look like inland lakes," he said.

Food and water will be flown to communities cut off by floods.

Kerang, in the Western District, is also expecting a flood surge any time between today and Wednesday. "They say there is 50 kilometres of water heading for us," a local motel proprietor, Dion Heaven, said. Several other Loddon River towns are preparing to evacuate.

More than 6500 properties were without power yesterday

A total of 18 emergency centres have given refuge to up to 600 people at a time, but only 11 were in use yesterday, a spokeswoman for the Department of Human Services said.

Health authorities have warned people to beware of obstacles in water, and to be careful about the risk of skin and gastric infections from contamination.

**with Adam Carey and AAP**

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/weather/victorian-towns-wait-for-the-inevitable-20110116-19sm8.html>

16 January 2011 Last updated at 09:25 ET

# Victoria's heart-wrenching day

Karen Kissane

January 17, 2011

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VICTORIA'S flood crisis will continue for days, with water levels in Horsham and Echuca due to peak today and tomorrow and many small towns expected to face inundation as creeks and streams swell with water moving downstream.

"The message to Victorians is that we are not out of the woods yet as far as this flood crisis is concerned," said Trevor White, state controller for the State Emergency Service. "In some of our river systems we are seeing unprecedented stream rises."

An emergency evacuation alert was issued to Echuca yesterday as the Campaspe River continued to rise beyond predictions. Last night 170 people were evacuated and 170 properties were flooded. Mr White said large areas would be flooded: "We anticipate parts of the central business district and areas to the west of the Campaspe River in Echuca to be impacted," he said.



It's shocking, devastating, terrible.. Charlton residents are enduring their second big flood in four months. *Photo: Alex Ellinghausen/Bendigo Advertiser*

Echuca mayor Neil Pankhurst said the town's levee had been designed to withstand a one-in-100-year flood, which is dangerously close to what was expected last night. "We believe it will hold," he said.

Horsham will be struck by the Wimmera River today and tomorrow, and emergency workers doorknocked the most at-risk homes yesterday. "We anticipate around 500 properties will be affected," Mr White said.

A total of 43 Victorian towns have now been flooded, affecting more than 1400 properties and more than 3500 people, with 5200 calls for assistance received by emergency services. They are the biggest floods in decades and in some areas are the largest ever recorded.

Premier Ted Baillieu, who yesterday visited Echuca and Carisbrook, said the crisis was one of the worst in the state's history and that the cost of repairing the damage would run into the tens of millions of dollars.

As the big rivers flow down into creeks and streams, many smaller townships are bracing themselves: "Looking at the area between the Campaspe and the Loddon rivers, that is a very vast area there, and there are many smaller communities where we will see the impacts of flooding ... There will be vast tracts of land that look like inland lakes."

Emergency alerts were issued yesterday to Quambatook and Culgoa, and the SES is also closely monitoring Donald, Rochester, Charlton, Glenorchy, Kerang, Casterton, Boort, and Rupanyup, as well as Geelong, which was not considered to be under major threat.

"We would like to remind residents that the threat of flooding is not over when a river reaches its peak, as water levels will remain high for many days," Mr White said.

Communities cut off by floods will be receiving airlifts of food and fresh water supplies.

Charlton, where besieged residents are enduring their second big flood in four months, was the first recipient.

"It's shocking, devastating, terrible, heart-wrenching," said local businessman Peter Gretgrix, of the wreckage of the main street. "It's just total devastation. Some of the shops in the lowish area are just a mess, windows smashed out. I've never seen anything like it."

Emergency workers were sandbagging the town of Culgoa to prepare for a flood expected to be worse than the one that devastated Charlton, according to Buloke Shire mayor Leo Tellefson. He said residents would be evacuated to a sports stadium in the nearby town of Sea Lake.

Kerang, in the western district, is also expecting a flood surge any time between Monday and Wednesday. "They say there is 50 kilometres of water heading for us," said local motel proprietor Dion Heaven.

Several other Loddon River towns, including Bridgewater, Serpentine and Appin have either been evacuated or are preparing to evacuate.

More than 6500 properties were without power yesterday in towns including Charlton, Donald, Birchip, St Arnaud, Boort and Wycheproof. Powercor worked to restore electricity during the day.

A total of 18 emergency centres around the state have given refuge to up to 600 people at a time, but only 11 were in use yesterday, a spokeswoman for the Department of Human Services said.

Snakes have been reported in floodwater in some areas, and health authorities have warned people to beware of obstacles in water.

Electricians warned that appliances that had been flooded should not be used until they were professionally tested.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Kieran Walshe again urged people not to walk, ride or drive into floodwaters, with 50 rescues now having been performed, 30 of them relating to people in cars.

Mr White said the floods were "dynamic" and urged residents to be vigilant and to continue to monitor emergency broadcasters, the SES website, or the information line 1300VICSES (1300 842 737). With

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/weather/victorias-heartwrenching-day-20110116-19sj9.html>

# Australia: Thousands leave homes as floods hit Victoria



Thousands of people are involved in the clean-up operation in Brisbane

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Thousands of people have fled their homes in Victoria as major flooding hits the southern Australian state.

The floods have already swamped some of the state's northern towns and are threatening 1,400 homes in 43 others.

At least 18 people have lost their lives in Australia's flood disaster so far. Dozens are still missing.

All the deaths were in the northern state of Queensland, where water levels have now largely receded and a major clean-up operation is now underway.

Victoria state officials said the flood is set to be one of the worst ever seen in the state.

Around 3,500 people have left their homes so far.

"The message to Victorians is that we are not out of the woods yet as far as this flood crisis is concerned," said Trevor White of the State Emergency Service.

"We still have four river systems in major flood, being the Wimmera, the Avoca, the Loddon and the Campaspe rivers.

"And of course we are seeing unprecedented stream rises not witnessed for decades, and in fact that's leading to widespread flooding over vast areas of Victoria that haven't been seen for decades," he said.

The towns of Echuca and Horsham are expected to be the worst hit.

'Heartwrenching'

Paula Ryan in Echuca told Reuters news agency the military had been laying sandbags in the town to try protect it from the Campaspe River.

Echuca's mayor, Nigel Pankhurst, said he believed the town's levee, designed to withstand once-in-a-century flood levels, would hold.

"Some properties will have water on them but we're not expecting any homes to be inundated or have water above floor level," the Associated Press quoted him as saying.

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Some towns in northern Victoria have also ready been inundated, including Charlton, in the south-west, where locals said three-quarters of the town was underwater after the Avoca river burst its banks.

"The force of the water was just unbelievable. Every street that the river was running down was just like a torrent," said resident Gary Tonkin.

"It has uprooted fences and a lot of people's house fences are washed away. The power came back on half an hour ago. The water is just brown and stinks."

Charlton resident Peter Gretgrix said the scale of the damage was "heartwrenching".

"It's just total devastation, some of the shops in the lowish area are just a mess, windows smashed out, it's terrible," he told AFP news agency.

Residents of the southern town of Rochester were attempting to clear their homes of mud and debris as the Wimmera river continued to rise.

"I've never seen it this high ever, so this is the worst," said Noel Mitchell.

"But I think it probably did peak at probably a little bit lower than they thought, so we're pretty thankful for that."

The premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh, said 18 people are now known to have died in the state, after the bodies of an elderly man and woman were discovered in Lockyer Valley.

A massive clean-up operation is taking place in the state capital Brisbane and surrounding areas.

At least 30,000 properties in the Queensland city have been swamped and many areas remain without power. Officials say the clean-up could take months.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12201918>

# Flash flooding hits Victoria

*Paul Millar, Reid Sexton and Maris Beck*

*January 14, 2011*



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## Rain, rain, rain: Vic braces for more

Extreme wet weather and flooding hit across Victoria overnight but is expected to ease by Friday night.

EMERGENCY crews are on standby to combat flooding expected to be worse than the devastating September floods in regional Victoria, as mudslides and flash floods hit parts of the state last night.

The SES and police warned people in the popular Grampians holiday centre of Halls Gap to evacuate, fearing the last bridge out of the town would be cut off overnight. One bridge was already under water, while mud and rocks were blocking the other road out of the town.

A group of three German tourists said their car was trapped by two landslides just outside Halls Gap, where they were planning to hike in the national park.



Sandbagging in Halls Gap. Photo: Justin McManus

Jochen Fleischhacker said: "We are pretty sad about it but we are glad we survived."

They were boarding two buses of evacuees leaving Halls Gap last night.

The SES has issued major flood warnings for the Loddon and Avoca rivers and properties in the area are expected to be under threat with heavy rain predicted to continue today.

The state government also said the Queensland and Victorian floods could affect its first budget in May, due to a big loss of GST revenue.

Tim Wiebusch, the acting director of operations at the SES, said predicted powerful winds reaching peaks of 120km/h in elevated areas would add to the problem through potential building damage, and trees and power lines being brought down.

In Creswick, residents sandbagged against the rising waters. Many holidaymakers had left or were packing up to go.

Police said 22 people at the Creswick Elderly Citizens Club, about 10 kilometres north of Ballarat, were evacuated as the Creswick Creek rose last night. People at the Loddon House Holiday Park at Baringup, beside the Loddon, were reportedly evacuated.

"Victoria's western areas have already received significant rainfall and this will impact the Loddon, Avoca and Wimmera rivers significantly," Mr Wiebusch said. "If these rivers receive rainfall in the upper end of the forecast range, then we are looking at impacts larger than the September flood."

The Avoca River had hit 6.8 metres at Charlton last night and was rising as rain continued to pour, putting the community at risk.

The SES said homes near the Loddon River, including at Newstead, Serpentine, Bridgewater, Boort, Durham Ox and Kerang, could be flooded.

The SES has responded to more than 1400 requests for aid since Tuesday night, with most of the calls from Horsham, Ballarat, Kyneton and Mildura.

In three hours after 5pm yesterday, the SES fielded 72 calls from Kyneton residents, mostly in response to flash flooding.

Flash-flooding warnings were issued for Horsham yesterday, with residents in low-lying areas saying the council was not doing enough.

People south of Horsham spent yesterday and the day before sandbagging homes.

Anger was directed at the Horsham Rural City Council, with claims the drainage system was inadequate.

"Surely the council can do something about it ... they say they are waiting for a solution but they are all talk and no action," one resident said.

David Eltringham, the council's general manager of technical services, said while low-lying rural areas were a concern, it was not worth spending a lot of money on underground drainage in places where there were not many houses.

Meanwhile, a section of the Great Ocean Road remained closed last night between Cape Patton and Kennett River following silting and major rock falls. With rain and strong winds predicted for the area, VicRoads said it would reassess whether the road will be reopened later today.

Premier Ted Baillieu said the floods in Queensland and Victoria had a potential to affect his government's first budget in May.

"Let's recognise that the Queensland floods are going to impact the economy broadly," Mr Baillieu said.

He said it was too soon to say what financial aid would be offered to Victorian flood victims.

■ Record rain drenched north-east Tasmania yesterday, isolating towns and soaking the floors of some homes, authorities said.

Beach town Scamander recorded 278 millimetres of rain to 9am yesterday, exceeding, in 24 hours, the previous January record, according to the Bureau of Meteorology

With **ANDREW DARBY**

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/flash-flooding-hits-victoria-20110113-19pu7.html>

# **Rain, rain, rain: Vic braces for more (00:00)**

Extreme wet weather and flooding hit across Victoria overnight but is expected to ease by Friday night. *13/01/11*

<http://media.theage.com.au/national/environment-news/rain-rain-rain-vic-braces-for-more-2131874.html>