



FLOOD RESPONSE GUIDELINES for the Community

Traralgon Township & Rural Surrounds

This information pack has been developed to assist our Community in understanding the Flood Warning System and to encourage them to develop their own flood response plan.

In the event of an emergency tune to ABC Radio FM 100.7 or AM 829



Important Contacts

For flood information tune to ABC Radio FM 100.7 or AM 829

Name	Phone Number	Website
Flood Hotline	Number will be broadcast on ABC Radio during times of flood	
Latrobe City Council	1300 367 700	www.latrobe.vic.gov.au
Victorian State Emergency Service - East Region	(03) 5126 1500	www.ses.vic.gov.au
VicRoads Traralgon	(03) 5172 2666	www.vicroads.vic.gov.au
Bureau of Meteorology: general information	1300 367 700	www.bom.gov.au
Police Traralgon	(03) 5174 0900	
Ambulance Service Victoria	(03) 5134 4666	
Department of Sustainability & Environment	(03) 5172 2160	
Latrobe Regional Hospital	(03) 5173 8000	
TXU (Energy and Gas)	13 18 98	

Other Important Contacts

Foreword

Floods can be dramatic and quick or slow and creeping. Their power can be significant and often frightening.

Unfortunately for residents in low lying areas, floods are natural phenomena which occur in many places where there is either a river nearby or the local weather can produce significant amounts of rain in a short period of time. The Latrobe Valley, Traralgon is one such place and the 1993, 1995 and 1999 floods provided a stark reminder of the damage that localised flooding can cause.

Environmentally, floods can be important to ecosystems. They bring soil nutrients, give the river system a good clean out and refresh and restore low lying wetlands. But to the community they can have devastating economic and emotional effects on people and their property.

Having a better understanding of flood causes, flood management systems and flood preparation strategies can help you to better prepare and perhaps minimise or prevent flood damage.

This document, the Flood Response Guidelines for the Community, have been developed to assist you in this preparation and to help you in gaining a greater understanding of the Flood Warning System.

By reading this document and following its practical advice, you will have the opportunity to plan for a flood event and develop personal strategies to reduce the impact that a flood event may have on you.

To protect life and property it is critical to be prepared and to have a plan. Please don't delay.



Paul Buckley
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Latrobe City Council, acknowledges the Victorian Flood Warning Consultative Committee, Emergency Management Australia, Bureau of Meteorology, Department of Human Services, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria State Emergency Service, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and consultants, CT Management Group for their support and assistance, as well as their contribution of data for the development and publication of the Flood Response Guidelines.

DISCLAIMER

This information pack has been developed as a guide only. Council accepts no responsibility for any loss arising from the application of the information contained within this document.

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Introduction

The Flood Warning System

Need for Flood Warnings in Traralgon

The Latrobe City Council Floodplain Management Study for Traralgon recognises that most of the physical works to alleviate flooding in the Traralgon and rural surrounds has now been undertaken. The Study identified that in addition to these works, a comprehensive flood early warning system was the best additional measure that could be implemented to minimise flood damage and risk to life.

With the flood warning system now in place, it is time to assist the community in gaining and understanding of how this system works, how it can assist them in times of flood and how they can use it to prevent loss or damage.

It is important to remember that flooding in Traralgon and its rural surrounds can occur quickly at any time of the year as a result of heavy rainfall in the upstream catchment. Rapidly rising flood waters often catch people by surprise and the key to reducing loss or damage during this time is preparation.

The Main Purpose of the Flood Warning System

The Flood Warning System provides real-time information on rainfall and creek flows in the Traralgon Catchment. This enables water levels to be tracked throughout a flood episode allowing early flood notices and warnings to be communicated to the community and relevant authorities.

A Cooperative Effort

The Flood Warning System represents a cooperative effort undertaken by Latrobe City Council, the Victorian Flood Warning Consultative Committee, Bureau of Meteorology, Victoria State Emergency Service, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Department of Sustainability & Environment.

These guidelines form part of the ongoing program of flood warning system improvements carried out for the Traralgon township by:

- Bureau of Meteorology
- Latrobe City Council
- Victoria State Emergency Service
- Victorian Flood Warning Consultative Committee

Franklin St Bridge, Traralgon 2007



How the Flood Warning System Works

Flood Warnings are available by the following means:

- The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) may issue a Flood Advice if weather patterns show the potential for flooding. This advice may be:
 - An **Alert, Watch or Advice** of possible flooding if flood producing rain is expected to happen in the near future. The general weather forecasts can also refer to flood producing rain.
 - A **Generalised Flood Warning** that flooding is occurring or is expected to occur in a particular region.
- Victoria SES and Latrobe City Council will also distribute flood warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology.
- The VoiceREACH “Xpedite” telephone system. When a Bureau of Meteorology Flood Warning indicates a potential flood threat to the Traralgon area, Latrobe City Council will alert the appropriate properties via the VoiceREACH “Xpedite” Telephone System.
- In order for this system to work, it is imperative that Latrobe City Council has your up to date telephone details so you can be contacted in an emergency
- These details will be used and maintained according to Latrobe City Council’s Privacy Policy (available from www.latrobe.vic.gov.au).

- ABC Radio at FM 100.7 or AM 828 ABC Radio. ABC Radio is the Victorian emergency services broadcaster.
- Bureau of Metrology web site: www.bom.gov.au.

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What the Warnings Mean

When a river or creek reaches a pre-defined depth and is running at a certain speed, a warning will be issued. Bureau of Meteorology flood warnings are categorised as minor, moderate or major.

The following gauge heights are indicative heights only, based on site topography and only very limited observations and local knowledge.

Location	Minor	Moderate	Major
Traralgon Creek @ Traralgon (Hwy) Gauge	3.5m Unconfirmed	4.0m Unconfirmed	4.5m Unconfirmed

Note: Traralgon Creek @ Traralgon (Princes Hwy Bridge) was established in July 1998 and all flood levels are based on this gauge.

Minor Flooding

Minor flooding causes inconvenience. Low-lying areas next to watercourses are inundated requiring the removal of stock and equipment. Minor roads may be closed and low-level bridges submerged.

Moderate Flooding

Minor flooding with the additional requirement of the evacuation of some properties. Main traffic routes may be covered. The area of inundation is substantial in rural areas.

Major Flooding

In addition to the above, major flooding causes inundation of extensive rural areas and significant urban areas. Properties and towns are likely to be isolated and major traffic routes likely to be closed. Numerous evacuations may be required.

When flood levels exceed major, the Bureau may use descriptors like "Higher than 1995, etc." to describe the flood.



Developing your own Flood Plan

Steps to Follow

The following is a sample plan listing the minimum steps that may be taken to lessen the impact of a flood. Pages 9 and 10 of this guide provide more detailed guidance on how to prepare before a flood and respond during and after a flood.

1. Pay particular attention to weather reports, especially flood warnings. If a flood warning is issued or you are concerned about flooding, tune your radio to ABC Radio on FM 100.7 or AM 828, the Bureau of Meteorology web site www.bom.gov.au or contact the Flood Hotline. Latrobe City Council transmits warnings, information (including the Flood Hotline number) and updates during a flood or other emergency via ABC Radio on FM 100.7 or AM 828.
2. Document how previous floods have affected your property. Refer to dates or heights as you best remember them.
3. Work out what will have to be shifted as the flood progresses, both on the property and also in the house. Stack furniture and possessions above the likely flood level. Move your garbage bin, poisons and chemicals to a safe place. Secure objects that can float and cause damage or block drains.
4. Floodwater may be contaminated. Where possible, avoid contact with floodwater, and never drink it. Pre-pack drinking water into clean containers before it becomes contaminated.
5. If you have to evacuate, follow your evacuation plan. If in doubt seek advice.
6. If leaving, remember to leave early, turn off the gas and electricity, and block off the toilet if you have a septic tank system. Collect personal items, photographs, medicines, pets, etc. Where practical, place pets (including dogs and cats) in cages. Proceed to an evacuation centre. If you choose to leave the evacuation centre advise the centre coordinator of where you are going so you may be contacted with information if required.
7. Avoid moving in floodwaters. There are many hidden dangers. Try to stay together.
8. Form your own Emergency Kit and maintain it in a ready condition. Some suggested items to include in your kit are:
 - portable radio and torch with fresh batteries
 - candles and waterproof matches
 - reasonable stock of fresh water and tinned food, including pet food if required
 - a first aid kit
 - strong shoes and rubber gloves
 - water proof bag for clothing and valuables; and
 - emergency contact numbers.

TO RELATE THESE STEPS TO YOUR PROPERTY, REFER TO THE PERSONAL CHECKLIST ON THE BACK PAGE.

Before the Flood

- Make yourself aware of your area's flood history and the effects of previous floods on your street or locality.
- Learn flood terminology used in the official flood warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology so that you can understand their meaning.
- Prepare a list of phone numbers - the local State Emergency Service, police, ambulance, hospitals, welfare organisations, etc. which you may need in a hurry if a flood occurs. (see page 1 of this booklet). Keep one copy handy near your telephone and one in your electrical metre box.
- If you live in a rural area, you may need to move livestock, machinery, pumps, irrigation equipment, etc. to higher ground. If you are likely to be isolated by floodwaters, paint the name of your property on the roof in large letters so your property can be identified from the air if required.
- Storage for lighter household items can often be built into ceiling spaces.
- Check with your insurance company to understand exactly what will be covered in the event of a flood. It is advisable to read, understand and clarify any points that you do not fully understand in your flood insurance policy.

On Receipt of a Flood Warning

- Listen to ABC Radio on FM 100.7 or AM 828. Ensure your portable radio has fresh batteries.
- Visit the Bureau of Meteorology web site – www.bom.gov.au.
- Activate your personal flood plan.
- Ascertain the whereabouts of other family members and neighbours and, if safe to do so, check if they are safe and aware of the situation.
- If possible, place possessions, poisons and chemicals above the predicted flood height and protect electrical appliances.

During the Flood

- Listen to flood reports and bulletins on ABC Radio on FM 100.7 or AM 828 and be ready to act. Additional information is available on the BoM Web Site – www.bom.gov.au.
- Do not use your phone unless it is essential.
- Actively discourage others from sightseeing in the flood area.
- Carry out instructions issued by authorities.
- If you remain in your home during a flood, keep a sharp eye out for unwelcome flood visitors such as snakes and spiders coming indoors.
- Store garbage in plastic bags above flood level until it can be collected.
- Avoid boating, driving, walking or swimming in flood waters unless absolutely essential.
- Never drink flood waters.

Developing your own Flood Plan

After the Flood

It is likely that if you are affected by a flood then you will need to clean up and dry out either your home or possessions - possibly both. Many jobs may be undertaken by the home owner or occupier or a competent home handyperson. Some jobs however, (eg. electrical and plumbing work) must be done by a tradesperson or other qualified person, and should never be attempted by the home owner or occupier.

It may take months, rather than weeks, to get a house back to its original condition. However, it is important to start work just as soon as the rain stops and the water has receded.

The initial tasks, which need to be done as quickly as possible, are as follows:

- Phone your insurance company if there has been any damage or loss
- Clean up, drain and start drying out the house as soon as flood waters recede
- Take out everything that is wet and that can be moved, eg. floor coverings, furniture, bedding and clothing
- On dry days, keep all doors and windows open. On wet days, leave windows slightly open
- Drain away or pump out water under the house, and try to increase the air flow to assist drying
- Check for and remove trapped water and mud in wall cavities and doors, as well as ovens and other low level appliances, cupboard floor cavities, shower trays, baths, benches and under shelving, etc.

Final Tasks

These final two tasks must be done only after the structure of the house has dried out completely.

- Replace wall linings and floor coverings only after the structural timber is dry. Remember, timber that is dry to touch may not have dried out completely. Drying could take months.
- Leave painting and wallpapering for at least three months after finishing the repairs (in some situations it may take considerably longer). If you paint and paper too soon you risk all your hard work becoming mouldy, blistering or peeling.

Further Information

More detailed information on flood preparation, safety and recovery is available in: '**A Personal Handbook of Flood Activities - What to do Before, During and After**' published by Emergency Management Australia and available from Victoria State Emergency Service on (03) 5126 1500.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This advice is given with the assumption that there is no structural damage such as leaning walls or foundation damage.

Consult a qualified structural engineer or building consultant if there are any signs that the house has moved on its foundations (eg. buckled floors, new cracks in the walls or out of shape door and window frames).

Roles & Responsibilities

Residents / Landholders

Occupiers and owners have a responsibility to:

- Prepare before a flood occurs
- Proactively assess how a flood may impact on your property and plan for this impact
- Look after yourself during and after a flood
- Avoid putting yourself and others at risk
- Decide whether to evacuate during a flood or to stay and if you are staying, implement your flood response plan
- Advise the Flood Hotline if you observe any critical issues (e.g. downed power lines, presence of onlookers).

You are responsible for seeking the information that you need during a flood event. Do not expect that someone will contact you.

Flood Information Providers

The Flood Information Providers are volunteer persons who assist VICSES and Latrobe City Council by checking allotted areas on the creek in times of flooding. They report any problems or observations to VICSES and Latrobe City Council which is then used to provide flood advice to the general community. They are on-the-spot contact persons, with experience in flood events.

Bureau of Meteorology

The Bureau of Meteorology collects rainfall and creek height data, assesses catchment conditions and the effect on streams, and provides official flood warnings and flood predictions to the VICSES, media, police and other organisations.

Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES)

The East Region of VICSES will manage the response to a Traralgon and regional surrounds flood event. The functions they perform include:

- Disseminating flood warnings to Latrobe City Council and other authorities
- Collating local information for the flood information line
- Providing advice on sandbagging
- Assisting Police with searches, rescues and evacuations as resources permit.

Latrobe City Council

Acting under the Municipal Emergency Management Plan, the City will activate the Latrobe City Emergency Management Group to monitor the effects and take appropriate action during a flood emergency. Actions may include:

- Disseminating Flood Warnings to the community
- Activating the flood alert system
- Providing flood advice to the community using mediums such ABC Radio, Voice REACH telephone and Flood Hotlines, providing food, accommodation and personal items for people affected by flooding
- Organising road closures and detours (if required),
- Managing a public information centre (if required),
- Maintaining normal municipal services (as far as reasonably practicable),
- Providing general assistance to the community after a flood.

Victoria Police

Victoria Police is responsible for law and order and preservation of life and property. They assist in distributing emergency warnings and provide a coordinator to ensure all agencies work together and arrange resources as required. In conjunction with VICSES, the Victoria Police are responsible for evacuations, searches, rescue from land and water, registration of evacuees and, in the event of a death, coronial inquiries.

Victorian Farmers Federation

The Victoria Farmers Federation (phone 1300 882 833) will endeavour to provide people with farming skills to assist landholders in moving stock and farm equipment before a flood.

Community Recovery Committee

A Community Recovery Committee will be formed with representatives from government and non-government agencies and organisations involved in the recovery process. This committee coordinates agencies involved in the recovery process to achieve an equitable distribution of resources to meet the community's requirements in the most appropriate manner.

Country Fire Authority

The Country Fire Authority will generally provide support, by way of manpower, communications and heavy vehicles for evacuations in flooded areas. The Country Fire Authority can also provide high-pressure hoses to assist in clean-up operations (arranged through the Community Recovery Committee).

Department of Human Services, Victoria

The Department of Human Services will assist the flood affected community through its partnership with Latrobe City Council and by providing support in the form of information about immediate financial assistance to householders as well as providing coordination for the delivery of a wide range of emergency recovery services, should they be required.

Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria

The Department of Sustainability and Environment will provide assistance with emergency fodder and agistment, salvage of injured animals and provide an assessment of farm losses within flood affected areas.

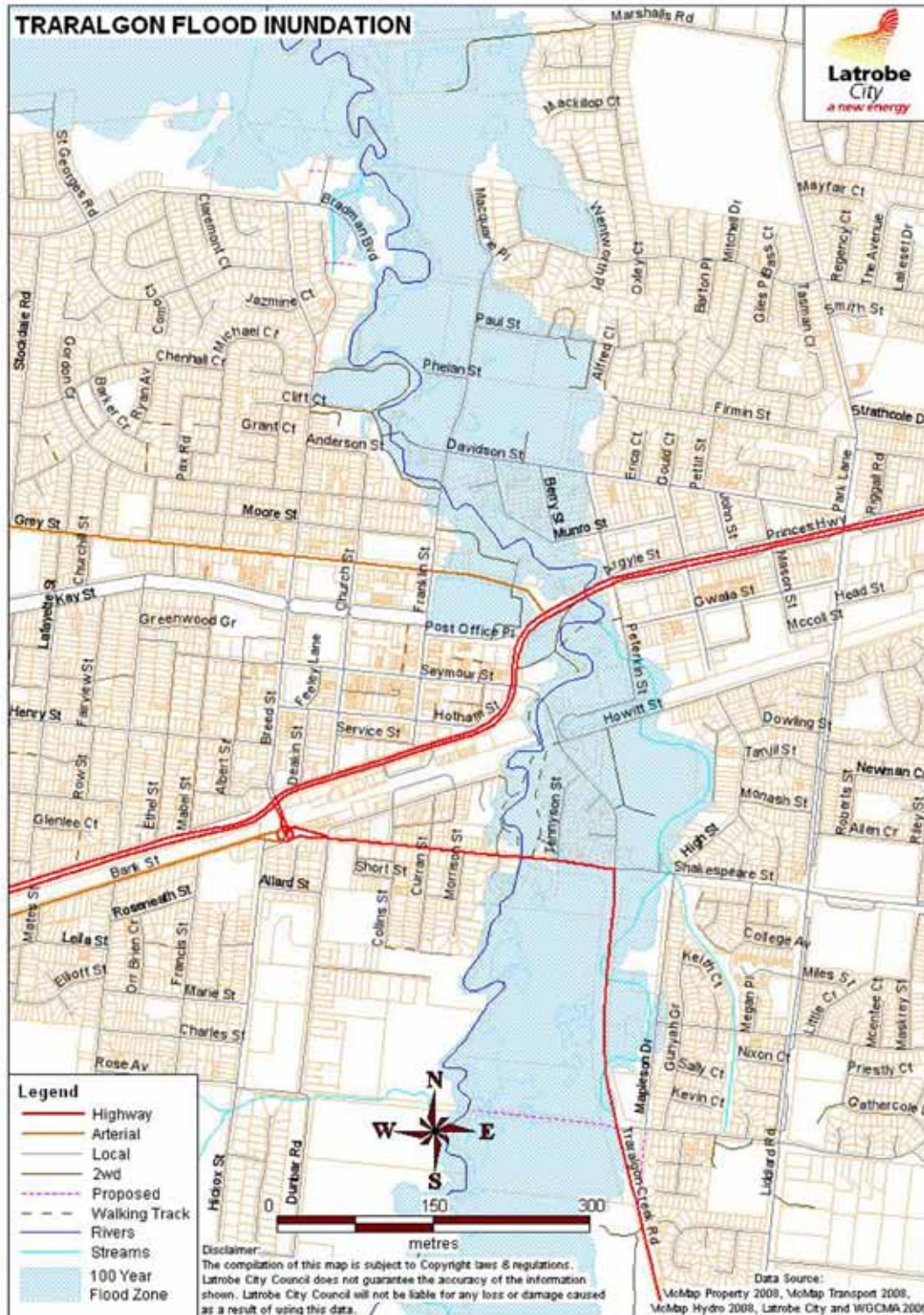
Volunteer Groups and Services Clubs

These groups and clubs provide manpower, expertise and equipment in support of the VICSES in response to the flood and to the community during the recovery. Support is generally arranged through the Community Recovery Committee.

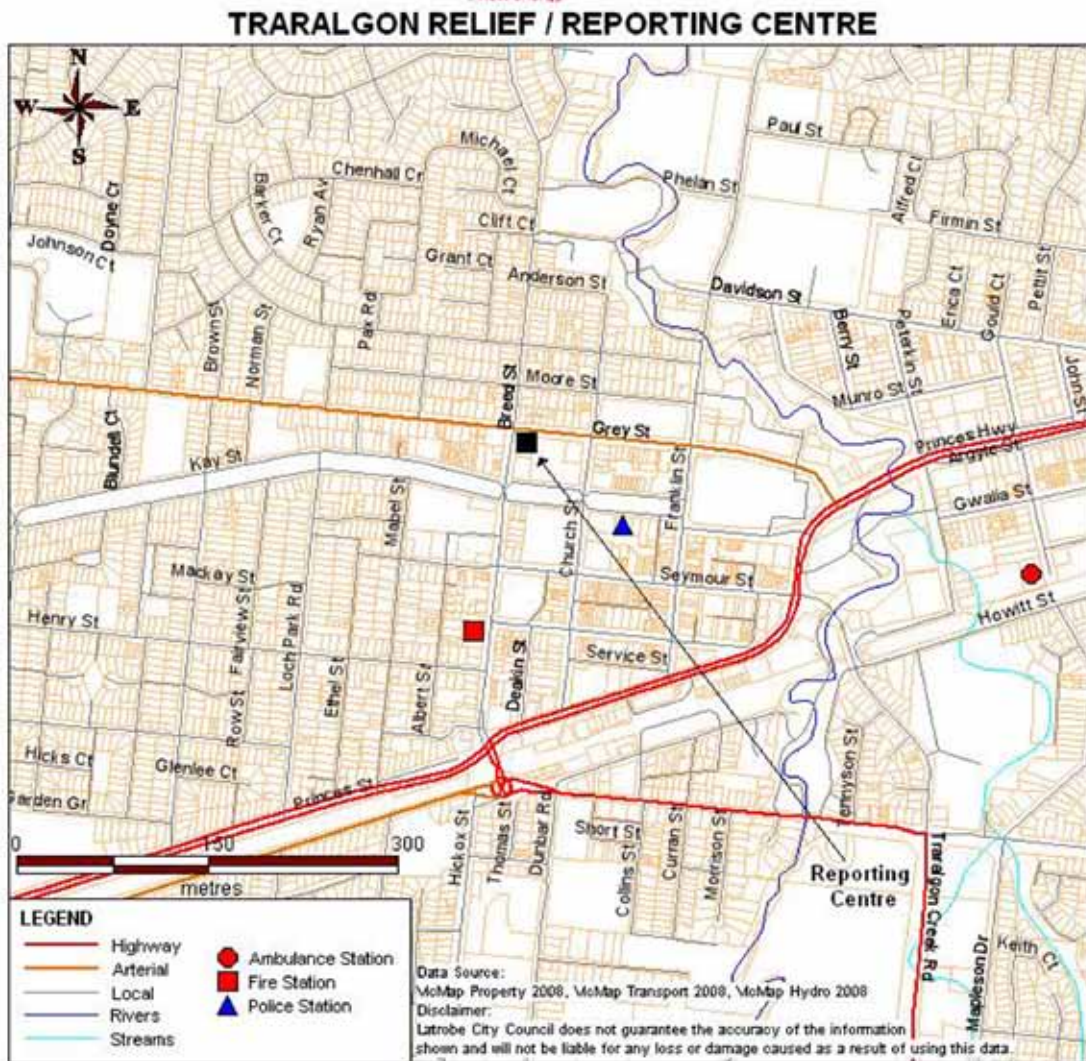
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

The WGCMA's role is to develop and implement flood plans and to take any action necessary to minimise flooding and flood damage. In addition, they provide advice about flooding and controls on development to local councils, community and State Government.

Traralgon Flood Inundation



Traralgon Relief & Reporting Centre



Flood Plan Personal Checklist



Special Instructions for Your Property

Make a list of the things that need to be done if you are away, and keep it with these guidelines for future reference.

Personal Checklist

Consider the items listed below and add others as appropriate for your own personal checklist. Tick those actions that apply to you as a prompt for early action.

Considerations	Minor Flood*	Moderate Flood*	Major Flood*
Home			
Neighbours / Police contacted			
Family accounted for			
Personal items; - photos, tax records, etc. accounted for			
Family car ready to go			
Lift electrical goods, drawers, other furniture, etc. on tables			
Sandbagging around doors, windows, vents / seal toilet			
Drinking water saved			
Pets OK			
Evacuation check:			
Medication, change of cloths, blankets			
Gas and Electricity off			
Farm			
Fodder – stored on high land			
Farm equipment moved			
Pumps lifted			
Stocks moved			
Dogs and other animals OK			
Chemicals up			
Other			
Road closures			
School closures			
Alternate access			

* For Flood Category Descriptions, see page 7