

Community newsletter – flood recovery update

23 January 2026

Thank-you to local communities

The flood event on Thursday 15 January was unprecedented, with more than 180mm of rain falling in a short period – far exceeding the rainfall forecast for the day.

Thank-you very much to local communities along the coast for your incredible response since the flooding, both in helping to provide immediate relief to those in need, and for your clean-up efforts since.

Many, many individuals and organisations have shown amazing generosity and an ability to rally together at a time of need.

Our thoughts continue to be with those impacted and we will remain focused on supporting the community's recovery over the coming weeks and months.



VICSES beach and ocean vehicle recovery operation

The Victorian State Emergency Service (VICSES), in partnership with several other authorities, coordinated a helicopter operation on Thursday 22 January to remove flood-impacted vehicles from coastal areas at Wye River and Cumberland River.

The operation successfully recovered 12 vehicles at Cumberland River and two vehicles at Wye River.

Council officers are contacting vehicle owners. If you own one of these vehicles and have not heard from us yet, please call Surf Coast Shire Council on 5261 0600 or email info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au.



Coastal towns are open for business

Cafes, restaurants, accommodation, tourist attractions and retailers from Lorne to Apollo Bay and beyond are ready to welcome visitors.

The Great Ocean Road is open and traffic is flowing in both directions, so you will have no trouble reaching your destination.

You will find most locations exactly how you remember them. There is recovery work to be done at Wye River, Separation Creek and Cumberland River in particular, but the sun will be shining and the coast is an ideal place to spend your long weekend.

Come on down, and please encourage friends and family from other parts of the state to do the same. You will be made welcome and your support will mean a lot to our small coastal communities.

Water quality at beaches

The Environment Protection Authority has given the water quality the all clear, and beaches are back open with surf clubs monitoring water conditions.

Visitors to the Great Ocean Road will have no trouble finding a safe beach to swim at.

Any issues at beaches between Lorne and Apollo Bay will be clearly signposted.

Surf Coast Classic cycling event

There will be an opportunity for visitors to support the Lorne township and see elite cyclists in action when the Surf Coast Classic comes to town on Wednesday 28 (women) and Thursday 29 January (men).

Both races start on The Esplanade in Lorne at 11am.

There will be rolling road closures along the route but disruption to traffic along the Great Ocean Road will be minimal.

It will remain open except for a brief 15-minute hold for the race start between the start line and the Deans Marsh-Lorne Road roundabout.

More information at surfcoastevents.com.au.

Impacted caravan parks

The Big4 Holiday Park in Wye River, Cumberland River Holiday Park and Erskine Park in Lorne remain closed for now. All other caravan parks along the Great Ocean Road are open and welcoming guests.

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) has been in daily contact with affected lease holders at the caravan parks in Wye River and Cumberland River, providing access to professional services and advice to support their rapid recovery as well as practical assistance with clean up.

We will continue to work with them to support their recovery and return to business as usual.

Community-led fundraising efforts

GoFundMe pages are being set up by the community to support those impacted by flooding.

We will share details soon.



Infrastructure repairs and beach clean-up

Surf Coast and Colac Otway Shires and GORCAPA started inspecting buildings, trees, roads, beaches and infrastructure from last Friday morning, and making temporary repairs as quickly as possible.

GORCAPA has been clearing debris from patrolled beaches at Lorne and Wye River ahead of the long weekend.

Skip bins have been made available at several locations, including Cumberland River, to assist the many community members who have rallied and done a mighty job of clearing litter and smaller debris.

Thank you to all members of the community who pitched in for your hard work to restore our beaches to their former beauty.

Plans are in place to start clearing debris from Separation Creek beach next week. This will require heavy vehicles given there are some very large logs that will need to be retrieved.

GORCAPA is working closely with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority to determine what timber is required for ecological purposes in and around the river.

We are working on a detailed plan for the Wye River Walk and will be in touch with the community for feedback once we have a draft proposal.

The pedestrian bridge over Erskine River on the northern side of the Great Ocean Road is closed for public safety, awaiting an engineer's assessment.

Detour signs have been put in place to direct pedestrians to cross at dedicated points nearby.

Great Otway National Park

Over the coming weeks, GORCAPA will be working with Parks Victoria and the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to understand the extent of flood damage to the Great Otway National Park so that we can make it safe and open to visitors as soon as possible.

DEECA's Rapid Risk Assessment Team (experts in assessing damage to Crown land assets) will be on site over the next couple of weeks.

Still need help?

If you need assistance after being impacted by flooding, please contact your local council (or GORCAPA for matters related to foreshore reserves).

We will seek to assist or put you in contact with the correct authority.

Colac Otway Shire: Ph 5232 9400
Surf Coast Shire: Ph 5261 0600
GORCAPA: Ph 1300 736 533

Look after your mental wellbeing

Please remember to take care of your own mental health after caring for others during an emergency event such as this.

It's natural for emotions to sneak up on us after a few days or weeks, and sometimes these experiences can impact how we feel and function.

There are many local providers you can turn to if you need mental health support or would like someone to talk to:

- Barwon Health Mental Health - Colac: Ph 1300 763 254 (business hours) or 1300 094 187 (after hours)

- Colac Area Health Counselling Services: Ph 5232 5100
- Step Thru Care Geelong Otway: Ph 8691 5480
- Medicare Mental Health: Ph 1800 595 212
- headspace Colac: Ph 5232 5520
- Great Ocean Road Health: Ph 5289 4300 (Lorne); 5237 8500 (Apollo Bay)
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative: Ph 5277 004

A list of telephone and online services is on the Department of Health website:
health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-services/telephone-and-online-services.

Emergency warnings and heat health safety

Hot weather is forecast during the week ahead.

Please follow emergency warnings and advice. Download the VicEmergency app and ensure notifications for your area are turned on, and make sure you know the CFA's fire risk rating.

You can look after yourself and your loved ones in hot weather by following these simple tips:

- Keep your home cool with air conditioning or fans
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing
- Drink plenty of water, especially if you're outdoors or active
- Plan activities for the coolest parts of the day
- Check in on family/friends/neighbours who may be more at risk
- Stay up to date with the forecast:
www.bom.gov.au

For further information and updates, visit
surfcoast.vic.gov.au/lorneflood
colacotway.vic.gov.au/emergency-event
colacotway.vic.gov.au/flood-FAQs