



Media release

From the Premier of Victoria
and the Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Tuesday, 10 July, 2007

OVER \$60 MILLION FLOOD RECOVERY PACKAGE FOR GIPPSLAND

The Premier, Steve Bracks, and the Treasurer, John Brumby, today announced over \$60 million towards a package to help Gippsland residents recover from the recent devastating floods.

The recovery package includes over \$30 million to rebuild flood-damaged roads and bridges, over \$20 million for clean-up works, over \$3 million for new Local Government infrastructure projects and initiatives to encourage tourists back to the region.

In Gippsland for the 72nd Community Cabinet, Mr Bracks said the severe floods hit the Gippsland region after drought and bushfires had already significantly impacted on communities.

“The Gippsland floods have caused damage to homes, businesses and farming land as well as a significant loss of public and private assets,” he said.

“The Bracks Government is providing immediate and longer-term help and support to enable communities and businesses to recover from the devastating impact of the floods.”

In the days following the floods, the Premier appointed a Flood Recovery Ministerial Taskforce headed by the Treasurer and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, John Brumby, to develop a recovery package for the region.

The Flood Recovery Ministerial Taskforce met in Sale late yesterday to finalise the multimillion dollar response package. This follows ministerial visits to the area to consult with the community and local councils over the past week.

Key new initiatives announced today include:

- Over \$30 million to rebuild flood-damaged roads and bridges;
- \$20 million to enable the Department of Sustainability and Environment and local Catchment Management Authorities to undertake clean-up works, such as repairing roads and tracks, debris removal and fencing repairs and replacement;
- Over \$3 million for new Local Government infrastructure projects to improve streetscapes and upgrade community halls;
- Low interest loans through Rural Finance for flood-affected farmers, businesses and not-for-profit organisations;
- A \$545,000 tourism package to encourage tourists back to the region; and
- \$445,000 for flood warning systems for the McAlister, Avon and Thomson rivers.

Mr Brumby, who visited Licola on Friday, said communities in the Gippsland region were hit by the floods just as they were starting to recover from this summer’s devastating bushfires.

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“The package we are announcing today will help these communities to get back on their feet as quickly as possible,” he said.

Mr Brumby said the package included providing loans of up to \$200,000 to farmers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations whose properties had been physically affected by the floods.

Householders whose principal residence has been damaged or destroyed may also seek assistance. Loans may be used for a range of purposes, including clean-up, fencing, repairs/replacement of structures, fodder, working capital and equipment/stock replacement.

The loans, administered by Rural Finance, will bear interest at three per cent per annum for the first five years and will be repayable over a period of up to 15 years.

The level of support will be assessed on an individual needs basis and have regard for the personal resources of the applicant including any insurance recoveries.

For more information on these loans phone Rural Finance head office in Bendigo on 5448 2600 or its Traralgon office on 5176 1761.

GIPPSLAND FLOOD RECOVERY PACKAGE

Roads and bridges

- \$20 million for VicRoads to rebuild roads and bridges, including:
 - \$6.2 million to replace Cheynes Bridge on Licola Road. An additional \$500,000 will be used to build a temporary bridge, including an access track;
 - \$1 million to repair the bridge at Licola township. An additional \$300,000 for a temporary bridge;
 - \$6.7 million to repair Licola Road;
 - \$2 million to repair Mount Baw Baw Road;
 - \$1 million for the shouldering of the South Gippsland Highway;
 - \$700,000 to upgrade the alternative track from Licola to Heyfield;
 - \$500,000 to repair McKillops Road at Wheeler’s Saddle;
 - \$100,000 for bridge repair at Boggy Creek; and
 - \$100,000 for bridge repair at Stony Creek.
- Over \$10 million to rebuild local council roads and bridges in East Gippsland Shire, Wellington Shire and La Trobe Shire. Bridges to be repaired include the Stephenson’s Road Bridge over the Tambo River at Swan Reach.

Community infrastructure

- Over \$3 million for Local Government infrastructure projects for community halls, footbridges, streetscape improvements and pathway upgrades:
 - \$1 million for the Paynesville Community Centre;
 - \$1 million for the Cunningham Footbridge at Lakes Entrance;
 - \$700,000 for the relocation of the Surf Lifesaving Club at Seaspray;
 - \$190,000 for the Loch Sport pathway;
 - \$45,000 for the footbridge/boardwalk at Maffra;
 - \$50,000 for the community hall at Newry (announced yesterday);
 - \$30,000 to help restore power to the Wilderness Lodge Alpine Park at Licola;
 - \$75,000 for streetscape works at Licola;
 - \$100,000 for the Sale Wetlands Walk;
 - \$50,000 for the Cowarr Community Hall;
 - \$45,000 for a pathway at Heyfield;

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- \$40,000 for streetscape improvements at Tinamba;
- \$20,000 for Victory Park at Traralgon;
- \$20,000 for the Traralgon Recreational Reserve;
- \$95,000 for the Narracan Creek; and
- \$300,000 for the Mt Baw Baw Tourist Connection Road.

Emergency response equipment

- \$445,000 for flood warning systems for the McAlister, Avon and Thomson Rivers. The systems provide real time information to authorities to gauge the height and flow of rivers and to assist with issuing flood warnings; and
- \$300,000 for Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) kits. The standardised kits contain specialist equipment to support the running of the MECC and may include additional laptops, phones, data projectors, electronic displays and information management systems.

Local community and farmer assistance

- Low interest loans of up to \$200,000 to farmers, small businesses and not for profit organisations whose properties have been physically affected by the floods;
- \$250,000 for the Victorian Farmers Federation to supply fodder for stranded and hungry stock. This is in addition to \$500,000 already announced by the Minister for Agriculture Joe Helper;
- \$620,000 to engage external consultants to advise dairy farmers and horticulturalists on how best to recover from flood damage; and
- \$100,000 for Wellington and East Gippsland Shires to provide legal advice to assist individuals with their insurance claims.

Clean-up works at parks and rivers

- \$10 million for clean-up works by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, including:
 - Repairs/reinstatements of roads, tracks, bridges and drainage systems;
 - Removal of fallen/dangerous trees/limbs;
 - Fencing repairs and replacement;
 - Treatment of areas where erosion has occurred; and
 - Debris removal.
- \$10 million for clean-up works by Catchment Management Authorities to:
 - Replace or repair assets, such as rock chutes, alignment fencing and rock beaching;
 - Maintain the physical stability of the rivers; and
 - Remove dead stock, debris and sediment jams.

Tourism package

- \$545,000 for a tourism package aimed at encouraging tourists back to the region, including:
 - \$85,000 in sponsorship for a major road cycling event involving around 400 competitors visiting the townships of Mallacoota, Orbost, Lakes Entrance, Metung, Paynesville and Bairnsdale;
 - \$220,000 to market East Gippsland, including \$20,000 for a short-term 'Open for Business' campaign; and
 - \$150,000 for a Licola Alpine National Park interpretation/visitor shelter; and
 - \$90,000 to further develop the Gippsland Plains Rail Trail by completing the 1.2km section from Maffra to Stratford.

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The Bracks Government has already announced significant measures to assist flood-affected Gippsland communities including:

- \$425,000 for a series of clean-up operations including the immediate pump-out of flood-affected septic tanks including \$225,000 for East Gippsland and Wellington shires and the City of Latrobe for immediate and continuing clean-up tasks;
- \$160,000 across East Gippsland and Wellington shires to employ coordinators to register and deploy volunteers for urgent and longer-term clean-up tasks;
- \$100,000 to the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) to support volunteers to rebuild fencing;
- \$100,000 for additional financial counselling through the Uniting Church of Australia Kilmany Family Care;
- \$100,000 for a community well-being initiative to assess the impact of natural disasters on communities;
- \$35,000 to assist East Gippsland Shire to spray against the spread of mosquito-borne viruses;
- \$25,000 to help stage community events;
- \$165,000 across the shires of East Gippsland, Wellington and the City of Latrobe to support their Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres (MECC) at Sale, Lakes Entrance and Traralgon;
- \$30,000 each for Wellington and East Gippsland shires to support their relief centres;
- Emergency Assistance Grants of up to \$900 for shelter and living needs;
- Temporary living expenses of up to \$730 a week for a maximum of 10 weeks for people whose principal residence is destroyed or inaccessible for more than one week and who do not have insurance. This grant is income tested and is designed to cover expenses for temporary accommodation and transport;
- Re-establishment grants of up to \$7300 for structural repairs and up to \$7300 for household items to help residents with their re-establishment of house structures and essential content items that are not insured. This grant is income tested;
- The Government will meet 75 per cent of costs for restoration of municipal assets, such as roads and bridges, between \$10,000 and \$110,000; and 100 per cent of the costs above \$110,000; and
- The Government is providing a one-off \$500,000 assistance package, which will allow the Victoria Farmers Federation to deliver emergency fodder to those farmers in the region whose properties and livestock have been impacted by the floods.

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