

Community newsletter – flood recovery update

Issue 3 | 13 February 2026

Economic impact in focus



Businesses along the Great Ocean Road are reporting serious economic impacts from the overlapping emergency events during January.

The coastal townships of Lorne, Apollo Bay and Port Campbell have all suffered from loss of visitation during the peak month of trade.

Business owners have cited confusing media reporting about the Great Ocean Road closure and a lack of reporting to advise fire no longer posed a threat to coastal townships as some of the primary reasons for reduced visitation.

Surf Coast Shire Council's Economic Development team has surveyed 68 businesses in Lorne, with 31 per cent saying they had lost the equivalent of a month of income, and a further 47 per cent reporting loss of at least a week's income.

This feedback was consistent across retail, accommodation, hospitality and tourism-based businesses.

Credit card data shows an average daily spend in Lorne between 1 and 15 January of \$386,000, which dropped to \$172,000 for the latter half of the month, following the flood.

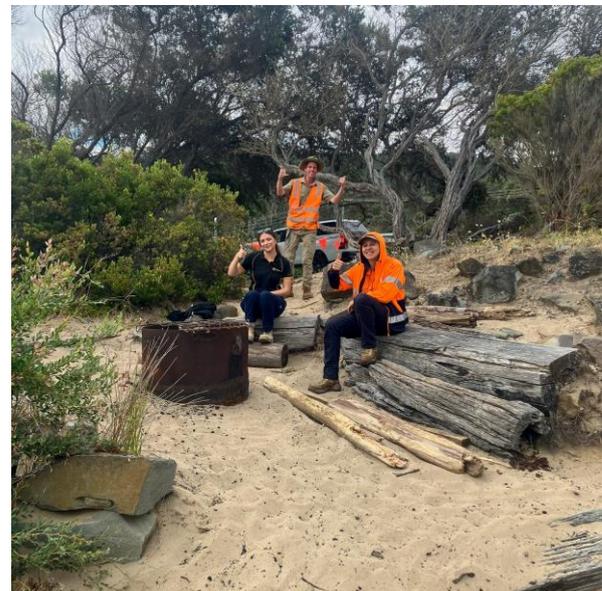
Business owners believed a large impact on Lorne visitation came from confusion about traffic impacts

and the safety of the town.

For example, while the Great Ocean Road remained open into Lorne from 16 January onwards and businesses were operating as usual, media reporting that 'the Great Ocean Road is closed' – due to its closure south of Lorne – was seen as a deterrent for people to visit Lorne.

Councils and peak tourism body Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism will focus on measures to support visitation for the remainder of the year, in an effort to help businesses recover some of the lost income.

Clean-up works: Wye River, Kennett River and Separation Creek



During the past week, Colac Otway Shire Council staff have continued cleaning out drains and repairing unsealed roads in the Kennett River area.

Council has also completed some clean-up of creek areas at Separation Creek to allow fencing to be replaced.

Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) crews were also in Separation Creek,

removing large timber and debris from the beach. Major clean-up works are now complete in all affected areas.

Wye River playground has been painted and is now back open.

GORCAPA will continue to monitor conditions and work with local communities if more work is identified.

Next week Council will be in Wye River cleaning out drains and addressing any unsealed road damage.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has inspected and is supporting a number of businesses, including the Wye River Big4 and General Store.

While wastewater systems were generally not impacted, the EPA continues to follow up on waste management and the long-term compliance of these systems.

Clean up works: Lorne and Cumberland River



Surf Coast Shire Council has repaired damage to the sealed road surface on Erskine Falls Road, and work is scheduled to place new crushed rock on the first unsealed section of the road – where a lot of material was washed away.

A geotechnical engineer has visited the landslip site on Erskine Falls Road and is working on a report that will present rehabilitation options.

The culverts along the road are also being assessed for damage by a specialist.

Contractors have recently removed a tree down alongside the Allenvale Road bridge (see image).

Drain clearing works for impacted parts of Lorne have been booked in and will be carried out over the next three weeks.

Next week a bridge designer will be assessing the impacts on the pedestrian bridge over Erskine River.

After a huge clean-up effort, it was wonderful to see the Cumberland River Holiday Park re-open on Friday 6 February.

Removal of remaining damaged vehicles

GORCAPA is working through the feasibility of identifying and removing any remaining vehicles at Wye River and Cumberland River, while also completing an assessment of the risk to the environment and public safety of leaving them in place (if removal is not feasible).

We note that there are still lost vehicles yet to be located.

Impact assessments

Colac Otway Shire Council's Secondary Impact Assessment Team has been onsite in the past week to check in with the community.

All impacted locations within Colac Otway Shire were visited, and Council is contacting holiday makers that were impacted to provide contacts and referrals.

Council teams have been working with groups and individuals within Wye River and Separation Creek.

Psychological first aid is available through multiple channels and local providers.

Community meets in Wye River

Thank you to those who attended or tuned in online for the community meeting at Wye River Surf Life Saving Club on 5 February.

Representatives from Emergency Recovery Victoria, the State Emergency Service (SES), Colac Otway Shire Council and GORCAPA provided updates and took questions from the community.

The major issues raised by the community included the economic impacts of the flood, requests to investigate an early warning system for the river catchments, and to ensure the warning alerts label each region correctly.

For those who missed it, the recording is available at www.facebook.com/ColacOtwayShireCouncil. Scroll down to find the post from 5 February.

Apologies to anyone who was distracted from the regular 'pizza night' when the meeting was called at short notice.

Agencies work together with ongoing recovery focus

Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) is establishing a working group to focus on the economic impacts to businesses along the Great Ocean Road and within the Otways.

ERV is also coordinating and chairing a Regional Recovery Committee for the flood event, to ensure a continuing focus in the coming months.

A more operationally focused working group has formed to address the infrastructure impacts. This group features representatives from Colac Otway and Surf Coast Shire Councils, GORCAPA, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority,

Department of Transport and Planning, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Contact Us



If you wish to discuss any aspect of the flood recovery, 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

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