

Date: 11 March 2022

February 2022 Floods

Council is well on its way to completing its post-flood infrastructure inspections and hopes to restore access to all residents bar those living at the far end of Capeen Creek Road by the end of the week.

Restoring access has been Council's priority to date. Once that has been achieved, Council will turn its attention to repairs on other flood-affected roads and infrastructure.

The floods damaged 24 bridges and causeways across the Kyogle local government area, with four bridges damaged and two washed away. All but four of the bridges have been re-opened. Council crews are working to re-open these bridges as soon as possible.

The Bruxner Highway and Kyogle Road are both expected to be open to one lane of alternating traffic at the weekend (11-13 March).

The Bruxner Highway, which has been closed at the Mallanganee Range due to a landslip, is expected to open on Saturday afternoon (12 March) at the earliest. Traffic lights will control the flow of traffic.

A landslip has also closed Kyogle Road at the Cawongla Range. One lane of the road is expected to open to traffic this afternoon (Friday 11 March). Traffic flow will be controlled by traffic lights.

Council plans to close the road from 8.30am-3.30pm weekdays so road crews can continue their work to remediate the landslip. The closure times have been set to allow the school bus service to use the road.

During the height of the floods, one evacuation centre was operational at Kyogle's Memorial Institute Hall, while community-run evacuation centres at Wiangaree, Woodenbong, Bonalbo and Tabulam were on standby. One hundred and 58 people registered at the Kyogle evacuation centre.

Water quality to the towns and villages in the Kyogle LGA was unaffected by the floods, thanks to the resilience built into the systems at Kyogle, Bonalbo and Woodenbong/Urbenville.

Kyogle and Bonalbo both have off-stream water storage dams that can supply both communities for extended periods and are not affected by turbidity in the river.

However, a water main in Kyogle did burst due to a landslip, and that cut off water to half of Kyogle during the flood. That has since been repaired.

Power outages also affected water supplies for rural residents who depend on electric pressure pumps to supply water to homes and for stock. Some rural residents were without water and power for 48 hours.

Rubbish from the floods is going to the Kyogle landfill and will be disposed of at the landfill.

Fuel supplies are readily available in Kyogle even though two of the town's three service stations were inundated. One service station remains inoperable.

Council is still looking at ways it can assist with temporary housing for people who have lost their homes, however the community, including local businesses and families, swung into action to help people who were from forced their homes or who had to move from the caravan park and showgrounds.

The caravan park and showground have since re-opened with a limited capacity at this time, while the grounds dry out and electricity to sites is reinstated.

Council is not aware of any additional GPs coming to the town, although additional mental health services are being provided through the Recovery Centre in Kyogle.

Fortunately, COVID figures, according to NSW Health statistics, have not risen in Kyogle, rather they have remained steady.

There is no volunteer coordinator in Kyogle but various community and church groups are working tirelessly to help with the recovery, liaising closely with their own networks and contacts.

In line with Resilience NSW, Council is encouraging Good Samaritans to take advantage of established arrangements in place between the NSW Government and GIVIT, to assist with managing donated money and offers of goods and services. Alternatively, people are being advised to contact their preferred charity to see what is needed and make a donation through them including the Kyogle Food Bank and local Op Shops such as St Vincent de Paul.

Council has not established a hotline of its own, but we are promoting the hotlines/phone numbers of the various agencies providing flood assistance such as Services Australia, Services NSW, Housing, the NSW Mental Healthline etc.

A Recovery Centre has been established in Kyogle and is operating out of the vacant storefront in the Kyogle Memorial Institute Hall. A range of support services including Services Australia, Services NSW, mental health and housing are working from the Recovery Centre.

Kyogle Council Mayor Cr Kylie Thomas said she was proud of both Council's and the community's response to the flooding disaster.

"Everyone has worked together to get us safely through this event," Cr Thomas said.

"The Kyogle LGA is a strong, and resilient community and everyone is doing what they can to help each other as well as provide support to our neighbours in Lismore, Richmond Valley, Tweed, Ballina and Byron local government areas.

"With damages to Council infrastructure and our road and bridge network estimated in the tens of millions of dollars, the recovery is going to take some time. But by working together, we will rebound."