

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



Thursday, 17 June 2021

SUPPORTING VICTORIANS AFTER STORMS AND FLOOD

The Victorian Government is protecting and supporting Victorians after catastrophic storms that brought down trees, caused major flooding and damaged vital infrastructure.

Acting Premier James Merlino visited Olinda today with Energy Minister Lily D'Ambrosio and Acting Emergency Services Minister Danny Pearson to announce more support for households still cut off from electricity.

To help people impacted by energy outages, a Prolonged Power Outage Payment of \$1,680 per week for up to three weeks will be extended to all eligible households without power as at Thursday 17 June.

The payment will be administered by Ausnet and help families buy the basics, find alternative accommodation and get through this difficult period.

The Government has written to the Acting Prime Minister requesting that this payment – which is expected to support around 7,000 households – is co-funded under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

This is on top of the Emergency Re-establishment Payments announced on Sunday, worth up to \$42,250 for households, where their home is uninhabitable or inaccessible for more than seven days.

The government is also in discussions with Ausnet about payments owed to their customers who experienced outages over the last week.

We know that these storms have had just as serious an impact on these communities as a bushfire and we know the recovery will be just as difficult. That is why we have asked the dedicated team at Bushfire Recovery Victoria to step across to support the clean-up and recovery work for communities impacted by storm damage, and still suffering with loss of power and communications.

This team have been supporting affected communities in the recovery from the 2019 bushfires and they have the experience and the skills to deliver the support that's needed.

The Emergency Management Commissioner has also made an initial request to the Australian Defence Force for personnel to assist with logistics and planning on the ground. There will be further requests made in coming days.

In addition, a State Energy Emergency has been declared in response to the impacts of flooding in Gippsland on the Yallourn power station, which has caused significant cracks in the banks of the Morwell River Diversion and the wall of the mine.

The proclamation was approved by Governor in Council this morning on the recommendation of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, based on advice from the Minister's Department, and was endorsed last night by the Security and Emergency Management Committee of Cabinet.

The situation at Yallourn has been the subject of detailed briefings over the past week and it has become clear that swift action to stabilise the mine walls is essential to protect the state's interests and ensure ongoing energy security.

If the mine flooded, Yallourn power station – which provides around 22 per cent of Victoria's power – would either stop operating or operate at a significantly reduced capacity, potentially for months.

Media Contact: Matthew Dixon 0438 190 148 | matthew.dixon@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Declaring the emergency means the urgent works needed to divert the swollen river away from the mine to repair the riverbanks and the mine wall can be authorised quickly, without the need for prolonged approvals.

Despite the damage to the Yallourn mine and the impacts it is having on power generation, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) advises there are no forecast supply issues for Victoria, due to low winter demand and the diversity of Victoria's energy generation.

Quotes attributable to Acting Premier James Merlino

"The damage done by these catastrophic storms to communities across the state – including my own local area in the Dandenongs – is immense and I know a lot of people are doing it very tough right now."

"That's why we're stepping it to provide additional assistance to make sure people have food, accommodation and support to begin the work of recovery."

Quote attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"These measures will help to protect the Yallourn mine from flooding and ensure Victoria continues to have a steady supply of energy."

Quote attributable to Acting Minister for Emergency Services Danny Pearson

"We know how incredibly difficult the past week has been across storm affected parts of Victoria. Our emergency service agencies have been working around the clock to help those communities in need."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing

"These storms have caused huge damage, distress and disconnection across Eastern Victoria. We are determined to stand with affected families, businesses and communities – to support and protect them, and help them get back on their feet."