

MEDIA RELEASE

REOPENING ROADS SAFELY A PRIORITY AS MID MURRAY BEGINS FLOOD RECOVERY JOURNEY

As waters recede from one of the biggest River Murray floods in living memory, the Mid Murray Council is beginning to count the cost of damage to roads, wastewater infrastructure, reserves, marine assets and more.

Council staff have been working diligently in recent weeks to assess the condition of local roads as they begin to dry out, with priority given to restoring road access to affected towns and shack communities as quickly and safely as possible.

However, with over 155km of Council-controlled roads impacted by the floods – and with many still inundated or too wet to safely access – this process is lengthy and involves road closures to allow for drying out, as well as vehicle size limits once roads are open.

Council has also worked closely with the Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) on road access to ferry crossings to ensure the ferries were able to reopen as soon as possible. Work continues on Hunter and Burdett Roads, with DIT hopeful of these opening in the next month.

Other Council assets also undergoing or awaiting assessment for damage include:

- Mannum Dock Discovery Centre
- 28 Community Wastewater Systems including treatment and sewage plants
- Stormwater infrastructure
- 19 public toilets
- Over 30 open space areas including riverfront reserves, playgrounds and campgrounds
- 80 river facilities including boat ramps, jetties, pontoons and landings
- Morgan and Mannum caravan parks.

While it's too early to estimate the full extent of Council's flood damage bill, costs of responding to the emergency have already exceeded \$3.5m. That figure is expected to increase significantly when Council is able to access currently inundated areas to assess the level of damage to its assets. While Council is grateful for State and Federal Government assistance, this won't cover the full cost of the recovery, and Council has initially budgeted for out-of-pocket expenses of \$1.8m in the short term.

Mid Murray Mayor Simone Bailey said the recovery process presents a huge challenge not only for the community and affected property owners, but also for Council.

"We are a regional Council with a staff of just 90 people, and we have a huge area of our district that's been significantly impacted. We know road access into these areas is a priority for many people right now, and we're making sure this is done first where possible, and when it's safe to do so.

"Investigating of the affected road network alone is a massive task – there's 80km of sealed and 75km of unsealed road to go over carefully, to make sure there are no hidden dangers. If we let traffic back in too early, there's the risk of further damaging the roads – meaning they'll be out of action for longer because they'll need substantial repairs. This has already happened in some areas, forcing us to close some sections again.

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"I understand the frustration some residents, businesses and property owners may be feeling – they want to get in and begin their own damage assessments and clean-up work. We're urging everyone to be patient, we're doing this as quickly as we can, but it is going to be a long process."

In assessing roads for reopening, Council follows a rigorous condition assessment process to determine the structural integrity of each road and whether it meets public safety standards. Even roads that appear intact once waters recede need to be thoroughly checked for hidden faults, and given time to dry out to allow them to carry the weight of vehicles.

"On roads where there's limited damage, and a drying out period has occurred, Council is looking to reopen these to traffic under 3 tonnes initially," Mayor Bailey said.

"Road closures and barriers are in place across the Mid Murray and we ask everyone to respect these. Some of these roads may look safe, but there's a very good reason why they're closed – they may not have been assessed yet, or they may have faults that make them unsafe to use."

Council will continue to update the community on road and infrastructure closures, as well as recovery support grants and initiatives, through its regular high river updates. To sign up to receive these, visit <https://www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au/forms/subscribe-high-river-information>.

Once roads are opened into flood-affected areas, property owners should still be aware of service limitations including a lack of power, wastewater services and drinking water supplies.

In the meantime, all property owners, residents, holiday home and shack owners, businesses and non-profit organisations affected by the floods should register now for a free structural and clean-up assessment by calling 1800 302 787.

The cost of the clean-up of waste identified through these assessments will be funded by the State and Federal Governments. (Find out more at www.greenindustries.sa.gov.au/flood-disaster-waste-management).

For the latest information on the Council's response to the flood situation, visit www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au/council/latest-news/sa-river-murray-high-flow-advice.

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