

DELUGE

More than 100mm falls over Thomson dam in 24 hours



It never rains but it pours: Greg Brooks and first mate Kelly row along flooded Arco Court in Bairnsdale. Picture: JON HARGEST

VICTORIA'S worst floods in almost a decade caused havoc across eastern parts of Victoria yesterday but also delivered a much-needed boost to parched catchment areas.

More than 100mm fell over the Thomson dam catchment, Melbourne's biggest reservoir, in the 24 hours to 6pm yesterday.

And more torrential rain and strong wind are forecast today.

**Mary Bolling, Annalise Walliker,
Mike Edmonds and Matt Doran**

But the heavy rain was not all good news with motorists stranded, small communities cut off, homes flooded, powerlines toppled and swollen rivers bursting their banks.

Properties near Swifts Creek in East Gippsland were cut off by rising floodwaters, taking residents by surprise.

VicRoads closed the Princes Highway at Nicholson, east of Bairnsdale, after the Nicholson River burst its banks.

Stringers Creek was also rising, threatening to cut off Walhalla, near Mt Baw Baw.

The weather bureau also issued major flood warnings for the Mitchell and Avon rivers, threatening residents in Bairnsdale, Stratford, and Briagolong.

At least 200mm of rain had fallen at Mt Baw Baw yesterday, while 93mm was

recorded at Bairnsdale, 84mm at Lakes Entrance and up to 22mm fell across metropolitan Melbourne.

Gabo Island, off Mallacoota in the far east of the state, received 90mm to 9am yesterday — its heaviest June rainfall in 145 years.

Before yesterday, Melbourne's storage level was at 28.6 per cent. Stage 4 water restrictions will kick in on August 1 if dam levels are not above the 29.3 per cent trigger.

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