



Play time: snow fell on ski fields, including 20cm at Falls Creek. Picture: CHARLIE BROWN



Praying the sandbags will hold: Inge Gaediske in Bairnsdale. Picture: JON HARGEST

of havoc

Herald Sun

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Now based at Paynesville, Mr Scott said another burst of storms will pour millions of litres of water into the Gippsland Lakes system.

"The lakes now are almost chocolate brown with a hell of a sediment load, and are already about 600mm higher than normal," he said.

"All the farm dams are full and the ground is saturated.

"Now we've had this storm and another one following, so what you can expect to happen is the lakes to rise bloody close to 1m.

"When the lakes go up 1m that puts areas of Paynesville and areas of Lakes Entrance under water."

At lunchtime yesterday the Department of Sustainability and Environment moved to get people out of national parks.

The Gippsland Lakes National Park was closed and emergency teams went in to check all paths and trails to remove tourists or campers.

DSE Bairnsdale regional manager Chris Rose issued a warning for people not to go into other parks and forests around the state, especially in fire-affected areas.

"There are significant land-

slips and tree falls, roads and tracks have been washed out, rivers will have deep holes and we expect some bridges to be washed out," Mr Rose said.

"We're not even able to get our crews into the bush because of dangerous conditions.

"We're expecting severe and sudden river rises because of the runoff."

A spokeswoman for Rural Ambulance said the floods had not caused any major injuries yesterday.

But Bairnsdale police's Sen-Sgt Craig Thompson said a man was in hospital with minor head and neck injuries, after a tree fell on his car.

"We had trees coming down on the Princes Highway at Munro and a line of cars waiting to get through," Sen-Sgt Thompson said.

"While this car was waiting, a tree crashed on to the car, and rescue workers had to take him to hospital."

With up to 125mm falling across Gippsland yesterday, weather bureau forecaster Richard Carlyon said last night's falls could take the total to 200mm.

Another 50mm is expected in flood areas today, and Mr

Carlyon said today's rain wouldn't be as heavy.

But the relief will be too late for residents in flood-stricken towns, with waters expected to flow over banks early today.

In Traralgon, municipal emergency co-ordinator Lance King said areas around the showgrounds and the town's main shopping centre car park were at risk of being flooded.

Handrails have been removed from bridges on Traralgon Creek in an effort to stop them washing away.

The rain is a welcome boost to Melbourne's water storage levels, which were sitting at 28.6 per cent before.

More good news for the drought-stricken state, a report from the weather bureau shows renewed signs of a La Nina being declared in the coming months.

While southern Australia has suffered under an El Nino drought for much of the decade, a La Nina pattern is the opposite condition.

Yesterday's report said the Pacific Basin was seeing the early stages of a La Nina event.

The Black Spur, the scenic stretch of road from Healesville to Marysville, was closed until further notice because several trees had fallen across the road in the wild weather, a police spokeswoman said.

And fallen trees forced the closure of the Mt Dandenong Tourist Rd for hours.



So this is winter: many Melburnians struggled with their umbrellas. At least one gave up. Picture: PETER WARD

Now there's a catch

Mary Bolling

RAIN poured into Victoria's biggest water catchment yesterday, raising hopes for healthier storage levels.

By last night, the Thomson Dam had received 100mm in 24 hours, with the downpour expected to continue today.

But Melbourne Water has warned that the state's supply isn't safe yet.

Before the rain hit, the Thomson — which covers 48,000ha — was at 17.8 per cent capacity.

Melbourne Water spokesman Ben Pratt said there had been some very good falls.

"We'd expect to see some impact on our storage levels in the coming days as we see inflows come into the reservoir," he said.

While weather forecasters say the rain could take the state's storage levels back to 30 per cent, Mr Pratt was not so optimistic.

"We still have a long way to go with catchments 28.6 per cent full," he said.

Melbourne is on stage 3a restrictions but will move to stage 4 on August 1 if dam levels don't reach 29.3 per cent.

Mr Pratt said it would take more than one downpour to significantly lift catchment levels. Last week, the Thomson received 91mm, but the influx increased the state's storage by only 0.2 per cent.

"We would hope to see a lot more like this across all of our catchments through winter and spring," he said.

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