

# WELCOME TO TOONGABBIE



**Understand your local fire and flood risk  
and help us stay safe**

**A guide to local emergencies for new residents**

Developed by the Toongabbie community for the Toongabbie community

Last updated: April 2021



# Emergencies can happen quickly, often with little warning.

Planning and preparing for emergencies can help  
to reduce impacts and recover more quickly.



**As a new resident, you are an integral part of the community's ability to prevent, prepare for and recover from the impacts of emergencies like bushfires and floods.**

This guide has been developed by Toongabbie residents to help the community be resilient together.

**In addition to this guide, you'll receive:**

- Emergency contact information which can be displayed on your fridge or placed in your emergency bag
- 'What will the Koalas do this Summer?' brochure, created by Callignee and Traralgon South Emergency Committee and Herald Sun cartoonist Mark Knight
- Official information from local emergency agencies

Please take the time to read through this brief guide to Toongabbie's fire and flood risk and let's all do our part to help keep ourselves, our neighbours and our community safe.

Special thanks goes to all involved in putting this guide together, including residents, members of the local CFA Brigade, Shazelle Witt from SCS Graphic Designs and the support of the Community Based Bushfire Management Project (a Safer Together initiative). We would like to thank and acknowledge Latrobe City Council, Wellington Shire Council and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority for providing the maps included. Photo credit cover page: Shazelle Witt

*The information shared in this booklet has been derived from local knowledge and is based on the experiences of community members. The information is not derived directly from emergency management authorities and we therefore disclaim all liability for any error, loss, or consequence that may arise from your reliance on these materials.*



# A Walk Through the History of Fire and Floods

## TOONGABBIE CHRONICLE

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 5 Our News - Our Views FEBRUARY 2006

### FIRE IN OUR BACKYARD

*By Tracy Aston*

By the time this edition is printed, I can only hope that we are out of full danger from fire, containment lines in place, weather favourable for the upcoming week and Toongabbie has survived unscathed.

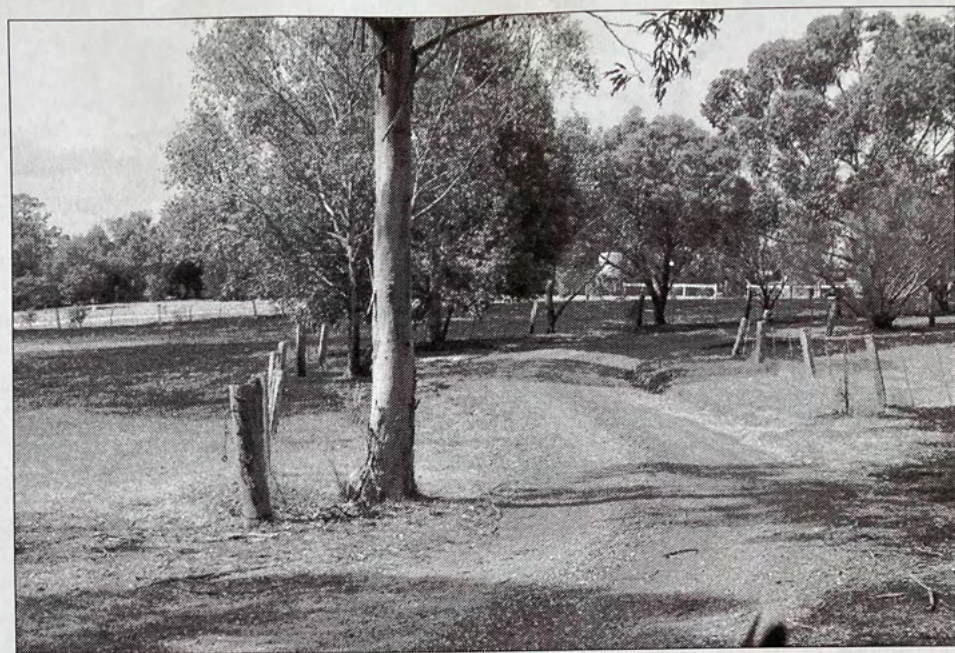
Two factors would have contributed to this firstly, the weather and secondly, through the pure hard work that a lot of people have achieved in fighting on the frontlines, preparing containment lines and co-ordinating the relief effort.

Many groups and organisations have been involved in this including government, business and volunteer personnel.

Town meetings have been well supported and informative ensuring that most of us didn't get too complacent and to take the potential threat and weather conditions seriously. I believe I can say that we have all done our bit.

Unfortunately, there are still too many people who, for some reason, think that Toongabbie will be immune from fire danger and have the 'it won't happen to us mentality'. Well, history will show you that there have been many a fire right through Toongabbie and within close surrounds, from both grass and bush fires. Hopefully, we have all learnt from this close call and can adopt and update a better fire plan, clear away that which puts us and surrounding properties at risk and, most importantly, respect and support our local CFA.

Some major issues that need to be addressed for the future is the responsibility of those people who choose to live on the bushline and so



## TOONGABBIE CHRONICLE

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2 Our News - Our Views JANUARY 2007



**FIRE!**

*By Tracy Aston*

Describe your heartache and successfully saved your most treasured possession, your

that lost thousands of dollars worth in shed contents and fencing, do they feel lucky even though their houses were spared?

To those residents from Geogarry North through to Seaton who escaped the fire-front, do they feel lucky that the wind changed and brought grief and misery to someone else



Top: Our driveway 15 Dec. 2006 after fires and above: our driveway 28 Feb. 2007 during flash floods!

## TOONGABBIE CHRONICLE

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3 Our News - Our Views MARCH 2007



**FLASH FLOOD!**

*By Sue Coppock*

Well who would have guessed we would be reading about this!

The fire devastation was enough but to experience flash flooding two months later in this sort of terrain is something I never thought I'd see!

Driving home from work at 5pm on Wednesday 28 February was very interesting indeed, what with water over the Cowarr Weir Road it was a bit scary at times but then to turn up into Foxs Road was like driving up a waterfall. The road couldn't be seen for water and debris.

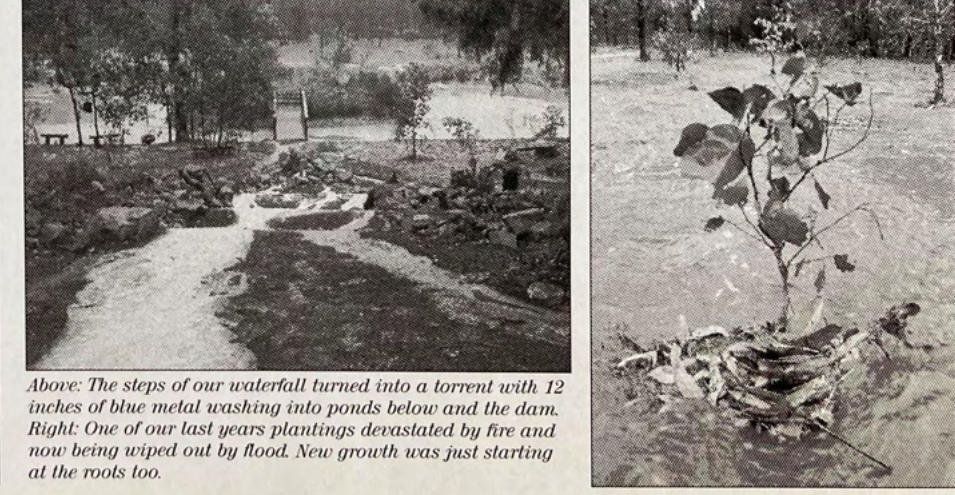
30mins in 30 minutes, that was

were totally helpless, nothing can be done to stop them, all we could do was stand and watch.

The destruction of the flash floods was much worse than the fires in the fact that it will take longer and more intense workdays to clean up.

It's been difficult to keep our chins up these last few weeks but good always comes out of bad and the good news is that all the dams from the top of the hill to the bottom are now full and the grass is turning green at the blink of an eye.

Now starts the clean up, again. More photos on page two.



Above: The steps of our waterfall turned into a torrent with 12 inches of blue metal washing into ponds below and the dam. Right: One of our last years plantings devastated by flood and now being wiped out by flood. New growth was just starting at the roots too.



# News from Toongabbie Fire Brigade

By Fred Smith

In early December a community fire awareness meeting was held to help people make informed decisions on staying to defend their property or choosing to leave when a fire was approaching.

This meeting was well attended, with over fifty people coming along. What home owners could do to prepare their homes if it came under attack by fire was also discussed at length. Many people in attendance had already made preparations and knew what they were going to do. Who knew then what was going to happen in Toongabbie and the surrounding areas a week later?

Everyone was looking north waiting for fires to come from that direction. Unfortunately, on Thursday the 14th of December, a deliberately lit fire that started at Coopers Creek moved very quickly towards Toongabbie. It spotted into the hills behind Fraser's Lane. When an extremely strong wind change arrived it took the fire along the hills, closer to the township. It spotted into the town, out into the grasslands and continued quickly along towards Cowwarr across the flats and then a wind change moved it to the Weir



Above: Smouldering stumps burnt for weeks after 14 December, CFA workers put as many out a humanly possible.

Below: Help came from far and wide with Stradbroke fireys helping to put out hot spots on Saturday 16 December.



## OUR LOCAL HEROES



Ian Alexander CFA



Ken Markham CFA



Ray Cole CFA



Phil Johnstone CFA

Toongabbie has many local firefighting heroes who live right here in our town and also from surrounding areas too. Some have many years experience in major fire outbreaks and they were able to lead and direct their strike teams with a wealth of knowledge to those who have experienced their first ever fire disaster.

Pictured are only some of our heroes and some of these have been lucky enough to be on a payroll while others, (volunteers) have put in many hours at the sacrifice of their own income. Many have been so exhausted from their 12 or more hour shifts that they have been unable to recover quick enough to then go back to work!

And spare a thought for their families left behind to have to deal with the burden of clearing and preparing their own properties as well looking after young children without their normal support network.

We the humble patrons of Toongabbie are extremely grateful to you all. Thankyou just doesn't seem adequate enough to express our gratitude. Our next edition will have some stories that will, hopefully, help us, as residents, understand and appreciate what a firefighter experiences in his battle to win 'the war'.

*Thank You All*



Brian Missen CFA



Rob Boothman CFA



Rob Taylor Grand Ridge



Scott Peach Water Board



Alan Paulett CFA



Roz Cole CFA



Phil Mitchell DSE



Brett Sedgman CFA

## page 4 More amazing photographs by Phil Johnstone





## 1914

### Central Gippsland Fires

- February 1914
- Greatest losses were felt in Callignee, Carrajung, Jeeralang and Toongabbie

## 1926

### Central Gippsland Fires (Black Sunday)

- A series of major bushfires occur between 26 Jan & 10 Mar
- 60 people were killed
- 700 people injured
- 1000 buildings destroyed

## 1932

### Gippsland Fires

- Early February
- Major fires occurred in Gippsland
- Fire spreads from Toongabbie Ranges, Maffra, Seaton, Newry & Surrounds
- Homesteads destroyed
- Stock and fences destroyed

## 1965

### Gippsland Fires



- 21 Feb - 13 March
- Over 482,333ha burnt
- 60+ Buildings destroyed

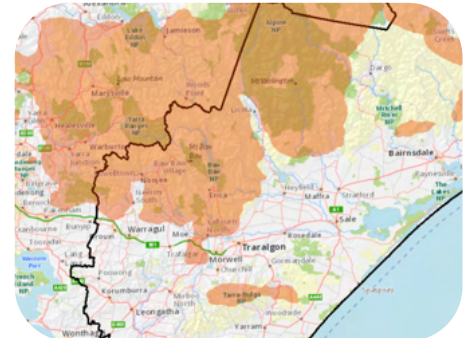
## 1944

### Gippsland Fires

Towns affected included, Traralgon, Sale, Morwell.

## 1938

### Central Gippsland Fires (Black Friday)



- 1.5 to 2 million hectares burned
- 71 people were killed
- More than 650 buildings destroyed

## 1977

### Gippsland Fires



- Toongabbie 1,600ha
- Mitchell River NP 2,900ha
- Stratford 550ha
- Two people killed
- 37 buildings destroyed

## 1983

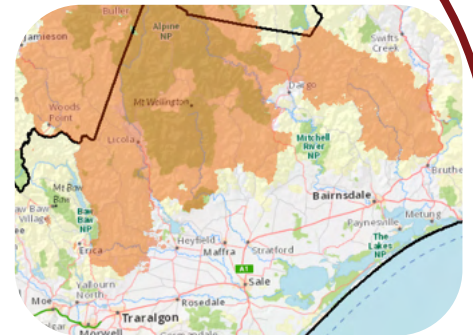
### Gippsland Fires (Ash Wednesday)



- 13th February
- Over 100 active fires in Victoria
- 360,227ha burnt in Gippsland
- 47 people died
- 2000 homes lost

## 2006

### Gippsland Fires

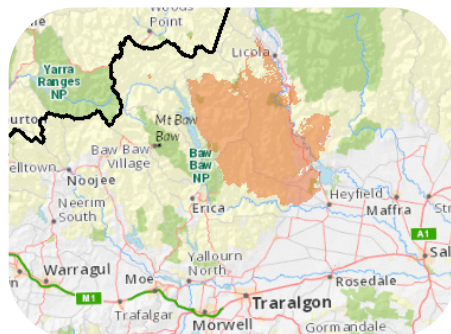


- December to mid February '07
- Over 1000 active fires
- 1,099,410ha burnt in Gippsland
- 1 person died
- Toongabbie, Seaton, Walhalla all impacted

## 2018/19

### Gippsland Fires

- 198,492ha Burnt
- Thomson Catchment complex under threat



## 2012/13

### Gippsland Fires

- 17 January
- 90,965ha burnt in Gippsland
- 1 life lost
- 21 homes destroyed
- Toongabbie, Seaton, Cowwarr, Heyfield and Dawson affected.

## 2009

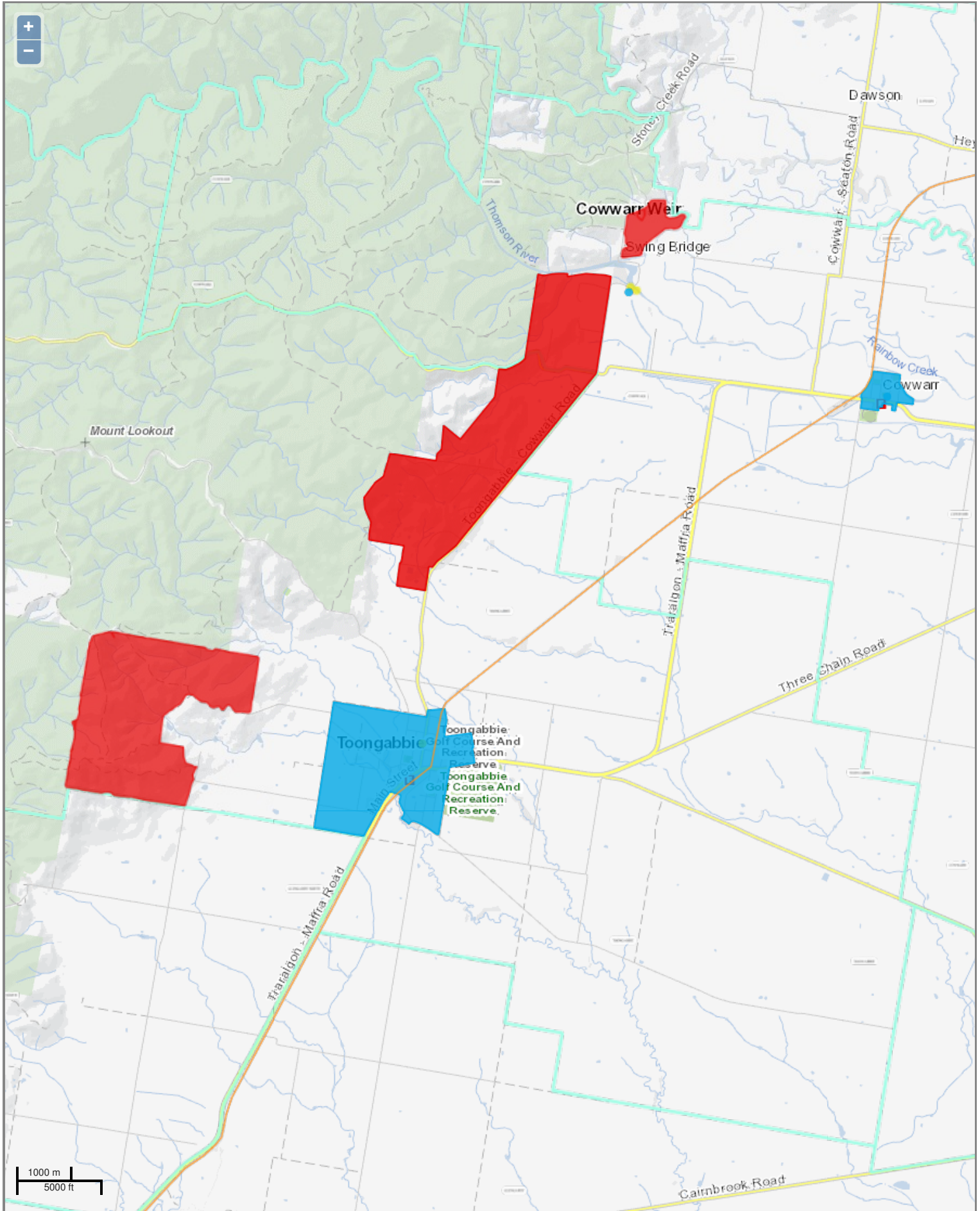
### Gippsland Fires (Black Saturday)

All history sourced from the Community Bushfire Connection website.

To find out more, visit: <https://www.communitybushfireconnection.com.au/history-theme-overview/>



# Toongabbie Bushfire Risk



Victorian Fire Risk Register - Bushfire (VFRR-B)

**Disclaimer:**

This map displays assets at risk from bushfire according to VFRR-B criteria within the local government area. It should be viewed in conjunction with the accompanying documentation which provides further details on the assets assessed and the risk assessment process used.

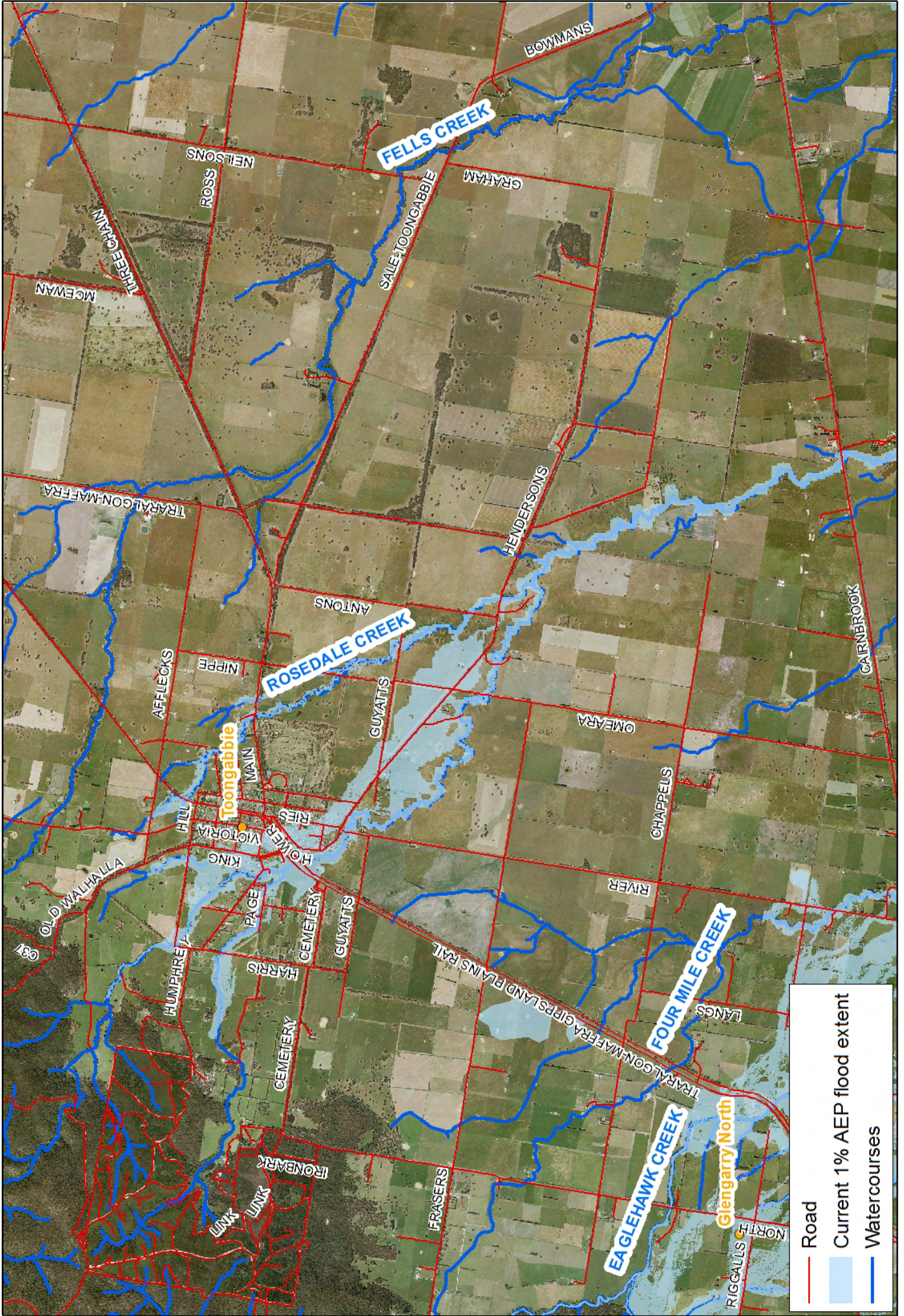
The municipal working group makes every effort to ensure the quality of the information available on this map.

This map is a snapshot generated from Victorian Government data. The State of Victoria does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for errors, loss or damage which may arise from reliance upon it. All persons accessing this information should make appropriate enquiries to assess the currency of the data.

- Risk Rating = Extreme
- Risk Rating = Very High
- Risk Rating = High
- Risk Rating = Medium
- Risk Rating = Low
- N/A







- Road
- Current 1% AEP flood extent
- Watercourses



## Toongabbie Flood Risk





# Things to Note in the Case of a Fire or Flood



**There is no Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort in Toongabbie.**

- ⊗ There will likely be roadblocks and gathering at the cricket pitch, recreation reserve or Cowwarr Weir during a fire event. **These are not deemed safe evacuation points.** It is safest for you and more helpful for the emergency services if you **leave early.** We've learned from past fires that both main roads (to Sale and to Traralgon) can get smoky and dangerous to drive on, all the more reason to leave early and avoid these conditions.
- 📶 It's better to rely on the radio for emergency updates and warnings (don't forget spare batteries in your emergency bag). The phone coverage is too unreliable to depend solely on accessing social media, websites or apps such as the VicEmergency app.
- **Don't rely on an ERC opening.** Options for emergency relief centres (ERC) at Traralgon and Sale can be limited or the centres open too late. When leaving early, consider who you know in major towns like Traralgon or Sale who you may be able to stay with temporarily.
- Get to know **your rights and responsibilities of being a rural land owner**, particularly with regards to fire prevention works and land clearing, such as the 10-30/10-50 rule. Contact Latrobe Council on 1300 367 700 or Wellington Shire on 1300 366 244 for more information about what you can, can't and what you're obliged to do to play your part in fire prevention and community preparedness.

Toongabbie suffers from mobile blackspots. **There is limited and unreliable mobile phone coverage** and the phone tower reaches capacity when overwhelmed.

**If possible,** have a landline phone in your house as a back up.





**“The destruction from the flash floods was much worse than the fires, in the fact that it will take longer and more intense workloads to clean up.”**

- Toongabbie resident after the 2007 flash flooding



- Don't underestimate the likelihood or impact of flooding, especially following fires. **“The destruction from the flash floods was much worse than the fires, in the fact that it will take longer and more intense workloads to clean up”** - Toongabbie resident after the 2007 flash flooding. Refer to the map on pg. 7 for flood-prone areas of Toongabbie.

- **If you plan to stay and defend your property, ensure you are very well prepared and have enough water - invest in water tanks prior to fire season.**

**Plan for the smallest details, like having a full tank of fuel in your car and putting personal/sentimental things in boxes or a suitcase ready to go.**



Refer to <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/stay-and-actively-defend> for more information.

- **Have adequate disaster insurance for your property and assets and use the cover straightaway to maximise the benefits.**

**In previous fire events we've lost access to town water and experienced low water pressure.**

For information on disaster insurance, visit: <https://www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au/>





**Horses are a significant part of our Toongabbie community.**

*Image credit: Keith Pakenham AFSM*

## Things to consider

- Clean sticks and leaf litter build up around stables and paddocks
- Designate a fire safety paddock that is large, open and well grazed
- Have troughs full and extra water available if power/pumps or pipes fail
- Register your property with Agriculture Victoria: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/property-identification-codes](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/property-identification-codes)
- Get in touch with the Toongabbie Riders Club or Pony Club. Get to know other local horse owners and think about ways you can support each other in preparing your paddocks/stables/emergency kits for fire season.

**If you plan to keep horses on your property or nearby, ensure they are considered in your emergency planning.**

**Let's work together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of horses and their owners.**





## Prepare a horse emergency kit

- Pocket knife
  - Wire cutters
  - Torch
  - Halter & lead rope
  - Betadine
  - Roll cotton
  - Bandages
  - Scissors
  - Bucket
  - Sponges
  - 2 – 3 days feed
  - Drinking water
  - Yellow Lotion
  - White Healer Cream
  - Vet contact details
- 

## Are your horses:

- Staying at home? Remove rugs/halters/fly veils
- Going next door? Write your phone number on hooves and horses' rump
- Leaving with you? Think about where you'll take them (race track/ sale yard/ showground) and make sure water is available there.

For more information, visit: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/horses-and-bushfires](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/horses-and-bushfires) or [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/stay-and-actively-defend](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/stay-and-actively-defend) for more information.





# Ways you can prepare



- Prepare your property - visit the CFA's website for resources, checklists and planning templates
- Have a plan and a back up plan, practice it regularly and tell your friends and neighbours what it is
- Know your neighbours and check if any are vulnerable or require assistance before/ during/after emergencies
- Download useful emergency apps onto your phone BEFORE emergency events and set alerts ON
- Check whether the CFA trucks can get onto your properties
- Plan for your animals (pets, equine, livestock and others)
- Join community meetings and events on preparedness and other related community initiatives/activities
- Create a phone tree with your neighbours

Have an emergency pack ready to go - there are prompts on the CFA and SES websites  
[www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/what-to-take-with-you](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/what-to-take-with-you)  
[www.ses.vic.gov.au/get-ready](http://www.ses.vic.gov.au/get-ready)



## Got questions about the community?

Ask at the General Store

Follow us on social media ([toongabbie.vic.au](http://toongabbie.vic.au))

Get involved in groups

Check the township website regularly for all newsletters, local groups and events on:  
[www.toongabbie.vic.au](http://www.toongabbie.vic.au)