

Natural disaster declared

Some relief for ratepayers from big flood repair bill

GOULDURN Mulwaree Local Government Area has been declared a Natural Disaster Area to help meet the cost of repairing current flood damage.

Similar to the aftermath of Goulburn's December, 2010 flood, the city and surrounds are expected to get at least \$750,000 in NSW Government financial help.

Goulburn Mulwaree Council applied to the government on Tuesday to be included among a growing number of NSW councils receiving help.

Police and Emergency Services minister Michael Gallacher yesterday named it among seven more municipalities to be declared Natural Disaster Areas.

Fourteen other areas had earlier been declared.

Significant flooding following days of heavy rain has left the Goulburn area looking at a massive infrastructure repair bill.

Council staff have started evaluating which works could start immediately.

Mayor Geoff Kettle said yesterday: "I welcome this funding announcement, and thank Mr Gallacher for his timely decision to include Goulburn Mulwaree in the Natural Disaster Area declarations.

"As of last Sunday, early estimates put damage to our roads and other infrastructure at more than \$750,000. But we won't know

the full extent of flood damage until all the water has receded – there's still a number of roads and bridges under water."

Cr Kettle said the Disaster Area declaration also meant farmers could access emergency funds for fence restoration, and sporting bodies such as golf clubs could receive help to repair flood-damage.

Whatever the final tally of flood repair costs, Goulburn certainly passed the \$250,000 threshold for government aid that triggers a Natural Disaster Area declaration.

"Financial relief is immediate, once an area is declared," Cr Kettle said.

"This is crucial, because it enables repairs to get under way as soon as possible.

"But in reality, I think we'll be similar to the 2010 flood, and we'll need at least triple the \$250,000 threshold."

It's not over yet

MEANTIME, forecasters are predicting more rain for Goulburn in the next few weeks.

Weatherzone meteorologists state that 2012 could be a record rainfall year and that Goulburn is on track for its wettest March in 40 years.

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SPLASH DOWN: Little Lilli Hayman-Hazelton and her best friend Hannah Spillane jumping in puddles during their lunch break from daycare. Photo: Emma Mastronardi.

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