

WARNINGS & WHEN TO ACT

KNOW THE COLOUR. READ THE ACTION. UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU.

READY CLARENCE
VALLEY

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DISCLAIMER

This resource has been prepared by the Maclean District Business Chamber for Ready Clarence Valley as general community preparedness information only. The Chamber is not an emergency service or emergency management authority. Information is based on official sources considered current at the time of publication, but emergency conditions and official advice can change rapidly. Always check and follow current warnings, directions and advice from relevant emergency services and authorities. Consider your own circumstances and seek professional advice where required. To the extent permitted by law, the Chamber and its officers, members, volunteers, contractors and project partners accept no liability for loss, damage or injury arising from reliance on this resource.

WHY WARNINGS MATTER HERE

IN MACLEAN AND THE LOWER CLARENCE, AN EMERGENCY WARNING IS NOT SIMPLY TELLING YOU HOW HIGH THE RIVER IS OR HOW BAD THE WEATHER HAS BECOME.

It is telling you what consequence is expected and what you should do about it.

During flooding, roads and access around Maclean can be affected before the town itself is inundated. NSW SES identifies road closures and progressive isolation as significant parts of Maclean's flood risk. This means waiting until water threatens your own property may leave you with fewer safe options.

The most important rule is:

**DON'T JUST LOOK AT THE COLOUR.
READ WHAT THE WARNING IS
TELLING YOU TO DO.**



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Community preparedness information only.
Always follow current official emergency warnings and directions.

This is probably one of our most important resources because the Lower Clarence has an additional problem: you can become isolated before your house is flooded. NSW SES specifically identifies progressive isolation of Maclean during significant Clarence River flooding.

HOW NSW EMERGENCY WARNINGS WORK

NSW USES THE AUSTRALIAN WARNING SYSTEM.
THERE ARE THREE WARNING LEVELS:



ADVICE YELLOW

There is a heightened level of threat.

Stay up to date because the situation may change. This is not necessarily a signal to leave. It is a signal to start paying attention.

For a Maclean or Lower Clarence household, this is the time to check:

- **Where is everyone in our household?**
- **What is the river/weather doing?**
- **Are roads we rely on likely to be affected?**
- **Is our emergency kit ready?**
- **Are vehicles fuelled?**
- **Do we need medication or essential supplies?**



WATCH AND ACT ORANGE

**Conditions are changing.
You need to start taking action now.**

This is where misunderstanding warnings can become dangerous.

A Watch and Act warning may tell you to:

- **Do Not Enter Floodwater**
- **Prepare to Evacuate**
- **Prepare to Isolate**
- **Avoid the Area**

These are different instructions. Read the action statement and act on that instruction.



EMERGENCY WARNING RED

**This is the highest warning level.
You may be in danger and need to act immediately.**

For riverine flooding, the instruction may be:

- **Evacuate Now**
- **Evacuate Before [time]**
- **Shelter Now**
- **Move to Higher Ground**

At this point, delaying action may put you at greater risk.



THE WORDS MATTER

STAY INFORMED

Something is happening or expected to happen.

For Maclean, this should be your cue to start actively checking conditions rather than simply noticing the warning and carrying on with your day. Check:

- ✓ **HAZARDS NEAR ME**
- ✓ **NSW SES WARNINGS**
- ✓ **BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY FORECASTS & RIVER INFORMATION**
- ✓ **LIVE TRAFFIC NSW**
- ✓ **CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL EMERGENCY INFORMATION**
- ✓ **LOCAL RADIO**
- ✓ **LOCAL RELIABLE FACEBOOK PAGES**

Think about where household members are and whether conditions could affect their ability to get home.

MONITOR CONDITIONS

Conditions may change.

Watch the weather, river conditions, warnings and the roads that matter to your household. Do not rely solely on what you can see from your own property.

A Maclean house can be dry while roads elsewhere are already being affected.

DO NOT ENTER FLOOD WATER

This one means exactly what it says.

DO NOT DRIVE, WALK, RIDE OR PLAY IN FLOODWATER.

A road you know well is not necessarily safe because you have crossed it during previous floods. Floodwater can conceal damaged roads, debris and other hazards.





PREPARE TO EVACUATE

THIS IS THE WARNING PEOPLE NEED TO UNDERSTAND PROPERLY.

Prepare to Evacuate does not mean evacuate immediately.

But it absolutely does not mean:

“Nothing to do yet. We’ll wait until they tell us to evacuate.”

It means conditions have reached the point where you should be actively preparing to leave. NSW SES classifies Prepare to Evacuate as a Watch and Act instruction. Conditions are changing and action is required.

IF YOU NEED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE TIME TO LEAVE SAFELY, CONSIDER WHETHER LEAVING EARLIER IS THE SAFER OPTION.

Clarence Valley Council specifically advises people who require assistance or have health issues affecting their ability to respond quickly not to wait for an evacuation order and states that leaving early is the best option.

**IF MACLEAN RECEIVES
PREPARE TO EVACUATE:**

- ✓ FIND EVERYONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD
- ✓ CONTACT FAMILY OR PEOPLE WHO MAY NEED ASSISTANCE
- ✓ GET MEDICATIONS TOGETHER
- ✓ FINISH PACKING YOUR EMERGENCY KIT
- ✓ CHARGE PHONES AND POWER BANKS
- ✓ PREPARE CHILDREN
- ✓ PREPARE PETS
- ✓ BEGIN IMPLEMENTING LIVESTOCK OR HORSE PLANS IF RELEVANT
- ✓ CHECK VEHICLES AND TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS
- ✓ CHECK CURRENT ROAD CONDITIONS
- ✓ CONFIRM WHERE YOU INTEND TO GO
- ✓ KEEP MONITORING THE WARNING

PREPARE TO ISOLATE

THIS WARNING IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO THE LOWER CLARENCE.

PREPARE TO ISOLATE MEANS ACCESS MAY BE CUT

It does not necessarily mean your home is going to flood.

It means flooding may prevent you getting in or out.

For Maclean this matters because NSW SES identifies progressive isolation during significant flooding, including impacts to Big River Way and other access routes. Areas outside the levee and surrounding rural properties can become isolated through road closures.

If you receive Prepare to Isolate, ask:

Could we safely manage here if we couldn't leave for several days?

MAKE SURE YOU CHECK

- ✓ PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION
- ✓ FOOD
- ✓ DRINKING WATER
- ✓ BABY SUPPLIES
- ✓ PET FOOD
- ✓ LIVESTOCK FEED
- ✓ MEDICAL SUPPLIES
- ✓ PHONE CHARGING
- ✓ BATTERIES
- ✓ FUEL
- ✓ CASH
- ✓ ESSENTIAL WORK OR BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS



AVOID THE AREA

DO NOT TRAVEL INTO THE AFFECTED LOCATION UNLESS NECESSARY AND SAFE.

For Lower Clarence residents, this also means reconsidering unnecessary travel when roads are beginning to be affected. Every additional vehicle entering an affected area can create another person requiring assistance.

EVACUATE NOW / EVACUATE BEFORE

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY WARNING. IT MEANS LEAVE ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL WARNING.

Do not spend this stage deciding where you are going, looking for medications, finding the cat carrier or calling around to organise transport.

That planning should already have happened.

Take your emergency kit and essential last-minute items and follow the current NSW SES instructions.

NSW SES advises people to leave early before roads close and to go to a safe family or friend's home, an evacuation centre if one is open, or an assembly area as directed.

WHAT ABOUT EVACUATION CENTERS?

This is another important distinction. Prepare to Evacuate does not mean an evacuation centre is necessarily open. Evacuation centres are activated according to the emergency.

Clarence Valley Council advises that their locations can vary depending on the hazard and that people should check the current evacuation warning or order for the designated centre. For the lower Clarence the Maclean Showgrounds is often BUT NOT always stood up as the Evacuation Centre. This highlights again the need to pay attention to advice being issued, and have multiple ways to receive it. ie online, radio or cb channels.

Your household emergency plan should therefore already identify somewhere safe you could potentially go, such as family or friends outside the affected area.

If an evacuation centre is activated, use the location provided through current official emergency information. Do not rely on where an evacuation centre operated during a previous flood.



MACLEAN'S FLOOD GAUGE

USEFUL, BUT NOT YOUR INSTRUCTION

People in flood-prone communities understandably watch river heights.

For Maclean, the NSW SES Clarence Valley Local Flood Plan contains operational planning information linking predicted heights at the Maclean gauge with consequences such as road impacts, isolation and the levee system.

But there is an important distinction:

A river height is information. A warning tells you what action to take.

Do not create your own evacuation decision based solely on a remembered gauge height from 2022, 2013, 2001 or another flood. Additionally the gauges tell us the current height, and do not take into account downriver or tidal impact to flooding.

They are a useful tool, but every flood can behave differently.

Rainfall location, tributary flows, tides, duration, local rainfall, road conditions and other factors can change the consequences.

Follow the current warning and its action statement.

DON'T WAIT FOR YOUR PHONE TO BEEP

HAZARDS NEAR ME IS EXTREMELY USEFUL AND HOUSEHOLDS SHOULD SET UP APPROPRIATE WATCH ZONES.

However no warning system should be your only trigger for recognising danger.

NSW SES explicitly advises:

Act early. You may not get a warning.

Natural signs such as intense rainfall, rapidly rising or pooling water and deteriorating conditions also matter. If you believe you are becoming unsafe, act to protect yourself rather than waiting for another notification.



WHERE MACLEAN HOUSEHOLDS SHOULD CHECK

HAZARDS NEAR ME

Set watch zones around the places that matter to you.

Don't necessarily set only one around your house.

Consider:

- ☒ HOME
- ☒ CHILDREN'S SCHOOL OR CHILDCARE
- ☒ WORKPLACE
- ☒ OLDER FAMILY MEMBERS
- ☒ PROPERTY WHERE HORSES/LIVESTOCK ARE KEPT
- ☒ OTHER LOCATIONS YOUR HOUSEHOLD REGULARLY RELIES UPON

NSW SES WARNING INFORMATION

Council provides local emergency information and directs residents to current road and flood information, remains open.

BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY

Use BOM for official weather forecasts, warnings and river information.

LIVE TRAFFIC NSW

Check current road impacts rather than assuming your normal route remains open.

CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL

LOCAL RADIO

FACEBOOK & SOCIAL MEDIA

Clarence Valley Council currently identifies:
ABC North Coast: 738 AM / 94.5 FM
2GF: 89.5 FM
Clarence Coast FM: 104.7 FM
TLC FM: 100.3 FM remains open.

Maclean District Business Chamber,
Clarence Valley Community Information
Maclean SES

THE SIMPLEST WAY TO REMEMBER IT



ADVICE
YELLOW

PAY ATTENTION

What is happening?
Could it affect us?
What should we get ready?.



WATCH & ACT
ORANGE

DO SOMETHING

Read the action statement.
Prepare to evacuate? Get ready to leave.
Prepare to isolate? Get ready to be cut off, and
decide whether anyone needs to leave first.



**EMERGENCY
WARNING**
RED

ACT IMMEDIATELY

Follow the instruction in the warning.



ONE FINAL RULE

THE COLOUR TELLS YOU HOW SERIOUS IT IS.

The action statement tells you what to do.

Your household plan tells you how you're going to do it.**

For Maclean and the Lower Clarence, acting early matters because access can become the emergency before water reaches your home.



MACLEAN & LOWER CLARENCE WARNINGS & WHEN TO ACT

This resource is designed to support household preparedness and does not replace emergency service warnings, directions or advice. Conditions and emergency arrangements can change. Always use current official information during an emergency.

LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCY: 000

NSW SES FLOOD, STORM AND TSUNAMI ASSISTANCE: 132 500

Prepared September 2026.

Local information checked against the NSW SES Clarence Valley Local Flood Plan, NSW SES Clarence Valley local flood information and Clarence Valley Council emergency information.