

Residents under the pump

BY ETHAN HAMILTON

BROKE residents have welcomed assistance from a local mining company in pumping stagnant water from their properties, but Hunter MPs are divided.

The yard of Michael Wilson's Singleton Street property was inundated during the floods earlier this month. He said the water came up to chest height in low-lying parts of the backyard.

Having been evacuated on the morning of July 6, Mr Wilson and his partner returned in the following days to begin the clean up of large pools of water.

"The RFS came, plonked a fire engine out the front, pumped water across the road and realised they were getting nowhere," Mr Wilson said. "Broke is a very sandy area and because the water table so high when you pumped the water across the road it was back the next day."

Following instruction from the Local Recovery Committee - comprised of Singleton council and agencies including NSW Police, SES,



BACKYARD SWAMP: Broke resident Michael Wilson said water levels have dropped substantially since pumping recommenced in his yard. **Picture: Peter Lorimer**

RFS, ADF, Fire and Rescue NSW, Resilience NSW, NSW Health, and Local Land Services - along with NSW EPA, residents in Broke stopped pumping water from their properties last week.

On Tuesday afternoon, pumping resumed in parts of Broke with assistance from Bulga Coal. Describing the mining company as "phenomenal" in the clean-up effort, Mr Wilson said the

water on his property substantially reduced as pumps ran overnight.

"Whether it comes back is waiting to be seen."

NSW Police local emergency operations controller



DAMAGE TOUR: Upper Hunter MP Dave Layzell and NSW Police in Broke on Wednesday. **Picture: Peter Lorimer**

Joanne Shultz said water being pumped is an exception to the instruction because it is standing water which isn't impacting erosion holes and is "particularly dangerous".

Labor's federal MP in the Hunter Dan Repacholi has been vocal in recent days about the need residents have to remove "foul smelling" stagnant water from their properties.

"A number of property owners have been forced to turn off pumps that have been operating for the last two weeks," Mr Repacholi said. "They want to be able to pump the water out, whether by truck or along the natural

causeways so they can get on with fixing up their home.

"But the NSW EPA have stopped residents pumping water off their properties and haven't offered a solution for how they will be able to get rid of the water."

Upper Hunter state MP Dave Layzell, Nationals, disagreed with Mr Repacholi and said he "fully supports" decisions made by the Recovery Committee.

"The pumping is still happening," Mr Layzell said. "We just don't want people pumping onto neighbours properties or pumping out of holes and potentially causing more problems."

Threads of hope for community in need

BY ETHAN HAMILTON

FREE clothes were on offer in Broke yesterday for residents who had their wardrobes taken by floodwater.

Stylist for Australian charity Thread Together, Kat Brown, set up a stall at Broke Hall for two hours with volunteer Helen Ghent.

Thread Together is a volunteer-led organisation with hubs across the country which receives donated items from a range of fashion labels and donates them to vulnerable communities.

"These may be samples or

last season's stock. Anything that might otherwise end up in landfill gets donated to us and we hand it out to people in need," Ms Brown said.

"Following the recent floods we reached out to the community and they reached back and we were invited in."

Broke resident of more than 20 years, Janette Swinson, was at the stall making the most of Thread Together's visit. With a large portion of her belongings being stored in a "container shed" Ms Swinson, who currently has six adults living at

“It feels like we are being acknowledged for what we went through”

Janette Swinson

her property, was left with limited clothing following the floods.

"We lost everything," Ms Swinson said. "I've been pretty lucky I've had a lot of

family collect and give me clothes and stuff so I wasn't here for me, I was here for everybody else."

Ms Swinson said the visit from Thread Together was a much-needed boost for many in the town.

"So many people lost everything and just to have name-brand stuff come in is amazing. We might not be able to get much but it's something," she said.

"Because we are tight-knit community, having outsiders like this come in it feels like we are being acknowledged for what we went through."



TIGHT-KNIT: Helen Ghent and Kat Brown from charity Thread Together. **Picture: Peter Lorimer**



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