

Rising water threatens Australian towns

by UPI

MELBOURNE - Emergency crews are struggling with the worst flooding in decades in Australia's southeast Victoria state.

The Melbourne Herald Sun said more than 100 people were evacuated Thursday as floodwaters inundated parts of the Gippsland region.

Residents of Sale and Bairnsdale faced the most immediate threat of flooding, the newspaper said.

The State Emergency Service said it would focus efforts Friday on the Lake Glenmaggie, on the Macalister River, and the Maffra district, ahead of a king tide that would cause sea levels to rise and water to gush west toward the Lakes Entrance area, the newspaper said.

Prime Minister John Howard said flood victims would be eligible for federal cash grants of up to \$1,000 if they had suffered serious injury or badly damaged homes.

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