In response to the disastrous flood of 1955, the Lower Hunter Flood Mitigation Scheme was initiated. Under the scheme, the natural floodways have been re-opened to divert excess water in major floods away from the river channel. The scheme is designed to direct floodwaters onto the floodplain in order to bypass urban areas and the city centre and reduce peak flood heights.

The Maitland Floodways Scheme is divided into two parts—the Oakhampton/East Maitland floodway and the Bolwarra floodway. Floodwaters are diverted from the river via the spillways. A series of basins divided by control banks made from rock and earth helps to direct the floodwaters and reduce velocity. The scheme provides protection from moderate levels of flooding in the built-up areas of Lorn and Maitland, and significantly reduces the damage caused by major floods. The 1955 flood at Maitland reached a height of 12.1 m (AHD*). If this height is reached again there will be serious flooding in these areas and surrounding rural land. The levees and spillways give considerable protection but they cannot control major floods.
Better FloodSafe than sorry

The Lower Hunter Flood Mitigation Scheme

- **Leves** contain minor and moderate floods to the river channel.

- **Spillways** control discharge of floodwaters from the river spilling onto defined floodways and are located at Oakhampton, Bolwarra, Swan Reach and Raymond Terrace.

- **Control and diversion banks** reduce the potential damage by controlling the velocity, direction and depth of floodwaters. They are located on the floodways at Bolwarra, Oakhampton, Swan Reach and Porters Hollow.

- **Floodgates** prevent back flow from the river during minor floods and release water from drains and creeks following major floods.

Oakhampton/East Maitland Floodway

At the onset of flooding, the floodgates on Wyburns levee downstream of Maitland will be closed to prevent backflow into Wallis Creek.

Floodwaters will initially overtop the riverbank at Oakhampton spillway no. 1 and flow into basin no. 1 and Oakhampton Swamp. Rising floodwaters will overtop spillway no. 2 and the Power House control and flow through a series of basins divided by control banks. Floodwater will flow across the railway line, across New England Highway and into Fishery and Walls Creeks, then back out to the river via the East Maitland floodway. At the same time, the river will overtop Wyburns levee and flow back into the creeks. Floodwater from Wallis Creek and Fishery Creek will flow into Dagworth and Wentworth Swamps at Testers Hollow where it is stored, and will drain away gradually when river levels drop. After a major flood, this can take up to three to four weeks.

Bolwarra Floodway

The Bolwarra floodway is located on the eastern side of the river. Larger floods will overtop the spillway shortly after the Oakhampton spillway commences operation, and flow across a series of control banks. A diversion bank slows the flow of water entering Lorn, thereby increasing the time for residents to evacuate. At the same time, floodwaters downstream will overtop the Tobins and King Island levees.

**Major flood**

In a major flood, the whole floodplain can become submerged and isolate parts of Lorn and Maitland in as little as 12 hours. The Maitland ring levee is designed to protect Central Maitland, Horseshoe Bend and South Maitland from flooding. However, when the river level reaches above 11.3 m (AHD*) at the Belmore Bridge gauge, and depending on the amount of floodwater in Oakhampton floodway, the ring levee can be overtopped. If floodwaters continue to rise on the Hunter River, water will begin to flow around the end of the diversion bank on the Bolwarra floodway and into the residential area of Lorn. The levee system is designed to reduce the risk of damage to property. It should not be relied on to keep people safe from floodwaters.

*Australian Height Datum (AHD)—a datum used to measure vertical height based on mean sea level as zero.*

**References**


For emergency help in floods, call the SES on 132 500

www.ses.nsw.gov.au