

New threat to Transline

BY CARMELO AMALFI

FLOODWATERS from Lake Raeside are heading towards the Transline, sparking fears of another washaway.

The massive spill is expected to reach Goddard Bridge, about 200km east of Kalgoorlie, tomorrow night.

Goddard Bridge was built after a 1975 flood and is the only wooden section on the line, which carries 70 per cent of interstate freight into WA.

It is about 20km east of the abandoned rail settlement of Zanthus where work crews have been repairing the line for more than two weeks.

Gold prospector and Leonora shire councillor Glen Baker said the floodwaters were moving down Ponton Creek on a front believed to be up to 10km wide.

He believes the floodwaters, due to peak on Monday, could cause more strife than the 1975 floods, which left 900m of

the Transline under water.

Mr Baker has been researching Lake Raeside as part of an environmental review for a proposed commercial development on his property at Malcolm Creek, which flows into Lake Raeside near Leonora.

"I think there is more water coming down than there was 20 years ago," he said.

"But it's hard to say exactly because there are no rainfall and run-off marker points to use as a reference."

Mr Baker said the 1975 floods, which flushed into Boonderoo basin, created a lake about 10km long, 3km wide and 25m deep that took 12 years to evaporate.

Four-wheel-drive vehicles, single semi-trailers and heavy trucks carrying fuel to Leonora, Leinster and Laverton continued to cross the flooded Kalgoorlie-Meekatharra road south of Leonora yesterday.

Levees to speed Transline repairs

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BY CARMELO AMALFI

WORK to build kilometre-long levees has begun on the submerged section of the Trans-Australia railway after floodwaters dropped 280mm yesterday.

Up to 28,000 cubic metres of soil will be carted to the 900m section of the line, which has been under a lake of floodwaters for more than a fortnight.

The levees are being built on either side of the submerged track to drain the water faster.

Chris Kiley, business manager of infrastructure at Australian National Railways in Adelaide, said the

railway could be reconnected by the middle of next week.

It carries 70 per cent of WA's interstate freight, including four passenger and up to 40 freight services to and from WA a week.

Mr Kiley, who returned to Adelaide late yesterday, said aerial surveys north of Ponton Creek had identified a wide front of water and silt moving towards Goddard's bridge, the only timber section of the railway, where it last flooded 20 years ago.

"The first trickle from the approaching waters, which are about 120km north of the line, should

reach the creek by Saturday night and peak the following week," he said.

"At the moment, the water is rising and submerging bushes and small trees in its path."

Mr Kiley said the lake that had submerged the Transline at Zanthus, where ANR crews were based, had dropped to about 500mm above the track.

Water was still draining into a 1.5km, 5m-deep and 5m-wide channel excavated at the weekend through salmon gum country just south of the damaged line.

Engineer John Mullens said the levees could be completed by early

next week if the water level continued to drop at the current rate.

Pumps to drain more of the lake and the first of 12 tip-trucks from Perth and Kalgoorlie were expected at Zanthus today to cart the sand and rock needed to build up the line's embankments.

Extra trucks from Laverton and Leonora are expected to arrive tomorrow if Main Roads WA lets them through flood-affected areas.

Asked whether work could have progressed faster with State and Federal aid, Mr Kiley said: "The best thing the politicians can do is stay out of it."

● The fibre-optic cable which carries most of WA's communications along the Transline was cut between Woomera and Port Augusta in South Australia for several hours yesterday, but was repaired in the afternoon.

Telecom WA media manager Ashley Zanotti confirmed that a contractor working in a Telecom line yard cut four parts of the cable at 9am.

Mr Zanotti said WA callers might have had difficulty getting through to the eastern States for a short while, but all calls were diverted through back-up systems.

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