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WET START — BUT SHOW WINNER

Early frowns turn to smiles

FRIDAY frowns turned to Saturday smiles for the 98th annual Swan Hill Show.

Although an inch of rain (25mm) fell on the showgrounds for the 24 hours to 3pm Friday, the show presentation went ahead virtually without a hitch.

And the smiles continued yesterday as Agricultural and Pastoral Society members cleaned up in more wet weather — thankful for that one fine day sandwiched in between.

Friday's attendance was understandably affected by the weather, but this is traditionally the day of lower attendance.

However, the sun shone on Saturday in a complete weather reversal and the end result gate-wise was a reduction of only about \$5000 on last year.

The only part of the program that had to be omitted was the sheep shearing competition.

The sheep to be used were ready and under cover on a NSW property, but the heavy rain prevented their transportation to the showgrounds.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect was that the showjumping program was able to be presented as scheduled, including the spectacular six-bar event on Friday night.

Society members praised the condition in which the ground was presented for the jumping events.

Chief horse steward Bev Langley said 60 top showjumpers competed — a 300 percent increase on the 15 to 20 which have entered in recent years.

Mrs Langley attributed the upsurge to the tremendous support this section of the program has received from local sponsors.

All ring events also went on without missing a beat.

Farm machinery was included in the grand parade for the first time in many years, with the wide range of modern-day machines of all sizes headed by the Army's Leopard tank

firing blank ammunition to add to the excitement.

A big entry of walking stock paraded around the arena ahead of the machinery.

Society president Wayne Murray said the biggest cattle numbers in the last 10 years at least were entered, with 78 in the Holstein Feature Show leading the way.

Young riders from six pony clubs from the wider district ignored Friday's wet weather, by taking part in the Pony Club Games — another first for the show — on the arena during lunch time.

This was also typical of the Friday attendance in general.

Although down in numbers, patrons ignored the wet conditions. They had come to the show to enjoy

themselves, and enjoy themselves they did — even though many were soaked to the skin.

Under cover, the decorated cakes were the highlight of pavilion exhibits with 48 entries exhibited in new display cases.

Pavilion entries were described as slightly up overall, with horticulture down the most.

The Miss Showgirl and associated entries beat all records, and the Young Farmers organised some areas of the program, including the farm bike trials, which attracted a larger entry than recent years.

And there was action aplenty in Sideshow Alley, with at least one operator reporting this was his best Swan Hill Show yet.

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PIANO SALE

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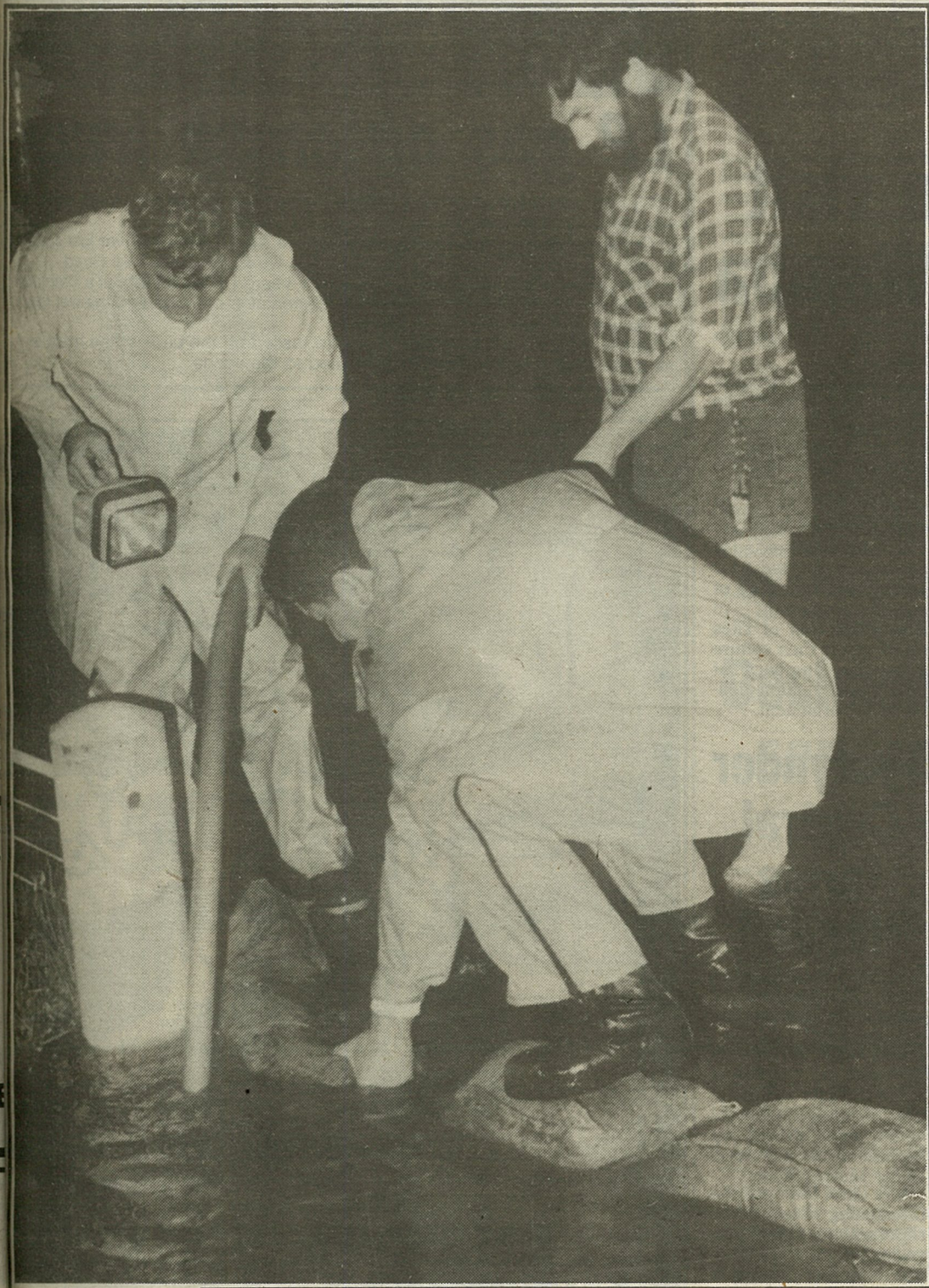
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Flood threat grows

HEAVY weekend rain has seriously increased the flood threat in Swan Hill.

The deluge necessitated emergency pumping to be used to alleviate local flooding in Swan Hill and drainage water backed up on the Tyntynder Flats and Pental Island.

With the Murray River this morning at major flood level on 4.72m and heavy rains in catchment regions, the State Emergency Service has called a strategy meeting for 3pm today.

Almost 100mm (four inches) was dumped on Swan Hill and water entered a number of homes in Milloo Crescent when a stormwater run-off dam for Federal Square filled.

At the southern end of Milloo Street between the

Mobil depot and the river, the dam was the scene of frantic activity last night.

Fire units and a barrage of portable pumps were used to lower the level by pumping into the swollen Murray.

Swan Hill City Council staff were still at the site this morning.

Last night water partly covered Milloo Crescent and Naretha Street and some Swan Hill North streets.

Water about 30cm deep today covers a 5km stretch of the Lalbert Road about 23km from Swan Hill and police have asked motorists to avoid the road if possible.

Floodwater also covers the Murray Valley Highway at Vinifera and Lake Charm, but should not cause motorists problems.

One lane of the highway at Reedy Lake and Lake Boga has been closed.

Weekend rainfall was variable, but heavy falls were received across the district.

Nyah recorded about 100mm, Manangatang 55mm, Lalbert about 50mm, Kyalite 78mm and Pental Island about 120mm.

Pental Island farmer and Pental Island River Management Board deputy district chairman Cr Keith Greenham said all island farmers were now pumping to discharge water built up in paddocks which could not gravitate back into the Murray.

"With this strong wind blowing the high land will dry off pretty quickly," he said.

SWAN HILL State Emergency Service unit personnel set up a pump this morning to remove water from a Drummond Street property after laying protective sandbags.

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