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# Emergency is over – for now

## Cootamundra residents given all clear to return to their homes

COOTAMUNDRA evacuees returned home at noon yesterday after two nights spent at motels, friends' houses and out of town after Friday's order to leave their homes.

Peta Beckerley was at work at 3pm on Friday when she heard the news her Warren Street home was within the 800-metre exclusion zone around the silo firefighters feared could explode.

Ms Beckerley and her four daughters, aged five to 12, could not get back to their home and spent Friday night at a motel in Cootamundra and Saturday night in Young.

"Not having a change of

clothes for three days was quite annoying. Each night I had to wash my work clothes out and just hoped they dried overnight," she said.

She said arts and crafts activities organised for her children at the Cootamundra Ex-Servicemen's Club helped allay their boredom but as no-one knew when the evacuation order would be lifted it had been a frustrating time for everyone.

"I have no complaints about how we were treated at the motels or the club but I hope they rectify this problem so it never happens again," she said.

Ms Beckerley said she now had clothes, family photos and important documents packed and ready to go should the silo situation worsen and another evacuation order is made.

"If it happens again during

the week I will have to stay with my children and I won't be able to work or make any money," she said.

A Department of Community Services (DoCS) spokeswoman said 717 had registered as evacuees and on Friday night 120 needed accommodation.

She said a further 15 needed a place to stay on Saturday night and DoCS found a bed for all who needed one but some had to leave Cootamundra.

The emergency evacuation centre was set up at the Ex-Servicemen's Club and was staffed by DoCS and volunteers from St Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and Anglicare.



**EVACUATION OVER:** Peta Beckerley had to wear the same clothes for three days and try to find ways to keep her daughters Hannah, 7, Haylea, 5, Jazmine, 9, and Sharni, 12, entertained after they were forced to leave their home without notice on Friday.  
Picture: Les Smith