

WODEN FLOOD

Search proves fruitless

Three young people presumed drowned in the Yarralumla Creek flood on Tuesday night had still not been found when searching ended yesterday.

Civil Defence and volunteer workers were stood down last night. The search was to be resumed by the police at 6am today.

Missing are Carmel Smith, 18, and her sister, Margaret, 14, of Risdon Place, Lyons, and Lon Victor Cumberland, 18, of Doonkuna Street, Braddon.

More than 100 policemen, firemen, Civil Defence and volunteers took up the search yesterday morning, concentrating on the Molonglo River.

Seven parties worked along the river until lunch-time, two of them with boats. One boat went downstream from Coppins Crossing, about 3½ miles from the Yarralumla Creek junction, and the other began from the junction.

That party took six hours to work from Yarralumla Creek to the sewerage works, about 2,500yd down the river. Lines were strung from the boat to the banks and swimmers spread across the river along the lines.

Other parties covered the banks and edges of the river on foot.

Although searching continued in the clearer stretches downstream from Coppins Crossing yesterday afternoon, the general

opinion is that the bodies will be found between Yarralumla Creek and the crossing. That stretch of the river is very congested. There are low trees all along the banks, and many snags underwater. Tons of debris has been caught in the trees, up to 10ft above the present water level.

The high-water mark is visible downstream of Coppins Crossing, but little dead grass and twigs has reached that area.

Several women from the welfare branch of the Civil Defence organisation arranged food and drink at the Yarralumla woolshed.

Constable J. Rogers stayed on duty there overnight.

Mr Doug Vest, who was born at 'Yarralumla' in 1900, visited the shed yesterday morning to compare the height of the Tuesday-night flood with that of one in about 1909.

He said his father had been overseer at Yarralumla then, and the Yarralumla Creek flood had backed up the Molonglo River 300yd past the 'Yarralumla' homestead.

After examining the site yesterday, he said the 1909 flood had been two to three feet higher than that on Tuesday.

He particularly remembered that the water had been up to the eaves of the cottage now occupied by

the caretakers of the woolshed, Mr and Mrs George Thaug.

On Tuesday night, the water ran through the Thaug's house about 4ft deep.

Mr Vest said the Yarralumla Creek had silted up a lot since Canberra had been developed.

ACT police said yesterday that no estimate had been made yet of damage to property in the Woden Valley.