

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 6 January - Edition 1



The bushfire emergency has been devastating for our communities and residents.

You are not alone, and we as a region are not alone.

There will be ongoing support from agencies and organisations across Australia to help East Gippsland residents and businesses work through the aftermath of these fires.

This newsletter will be distributed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to keep you informed of community news in relation to the fires.

Emergency information

This newsletter does not have emergency information.

For fire warnings use the Vic Emergency app or website, www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/

What we know

Donations

The outpouring of concern for our region from across Victoria, Australia and overseas has been incredible.

Already, donation centres and local halls are at capacity. Community donations of physical items such as food and clothing are not required at this time.

The preferred way for community members to donate to those affected by the fires is by cash donations to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund's Bushfire Appeal. 100% of donated funds go to Gippslanders when they need it most – in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.

Some applications have already been assessed and donations distributed.

GERF is run by volunteers and 100% of donations will go to bushfire affected Gippslanders. Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Find out how to donate here: www.gerf.org.au



Mayor Cr John White with two of the hundreds of Army Reserves, and Governor-General of Australia His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) outside the relief centre at Bairnsdale City Oval on Sunday 5 January. The Governor-General spent over an hour inside the relief centre chatting with local residents impacted by the bushfires, and the many volunteers and staff.

What you can do

Mental health

Please check in at the Emergency Relief Centre to find out about the services available to help you and your family, and to connect with others in your community.

It is normal for a distressing or frightening event to affect you physically, mentally and emotionally. Look out for others and if you need help, seek help. You might find talking to friends and family useful; or talk with your GP. It may be a good idea to see a counsellor or psychologist to help you process your experience.

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Australian Psychological Society Referral Service:
Call 1800 333 497

Information on trauma reaction and recovery:
[Trauma - reaction and recovery - Better Health Channel](#)

Financial assistance

Current financial assistance grants are:

DHHS Emergency Relief Assistance Payment - Personal Hardship Assistance Program

Emergency relief assistance may be available for up to 7 days after the emergency event. A one-off payment (up to \$1800 for families/\$500 for individuals) is provided to help meet immediate needs, including emergency food, shelter, clothing, medication and accommodation.

A needs assessment is carried out by a Personal Hardship Assistance Officer at an Emergency Relief Centre to determine eligibility.

For more information on assistance, go to DHHS website: www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

To receive this payment, you need to have been adversely affected by the fire. For example,

- your principal place of residence has been destroyed or must be demolished
- the interior of your principal place of residence has sustained major damage
- damage from the fire has exposed the interior of your principal place of residence to the elements
- your principal place of residence has been declared structurally unsound
- the interior of your residence has been affected by sewerage contamination.

If you're eligible, you will get \$1000 per adult, \$400 for each child under 16 years of age.

The fastest way to claim is over the phone. Call 180 22 66, or go to this website:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/victorian-bushfires-december-2019-australian-government-disaster-recovery-payment#a4>

If other financial assistance programs are offered in the future, Council will inform the community.



Three convoys of donated hay, on more than 100 trucks and trailers, went to the High Country, Buchan/Gelantipy and Omeo districts on Sunday 5 January.

What we are doing

East Gippsland Livestock Exchange

We urge everyone to seek accurate information from Council or DELWP/Incident Control Centre only.

There have been various reports, particularly on social media, about the status of the saleyards and what that means for horse owners etc.

- Horses are not being evacuated from the saleyards and will not be displaced.

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- Stock agents have confirmed there is an intent to have a cattle sale later this week, to facilitate the removal of stock from fire-affected areas and to provide some cash flow for affected farmers.
- Council is working on arrangements for agistment / rehoming horses that are at the saleyards. Owners will be contacted about potential arrangements.
- If your horse/s is at the saleyards and it's safe to move them, we ask you to consider it.
- Fodder donations can be made at the Bairnsdale Aerodrome, through Council and the Victorian Farmers Federation.

Council services

Just like many other residents, a high number of Council staff evacuated the area or have been fighting fires. There will be changes to some of our services as staff assist with emergency management and some sites are not yet accessible. See below for details:

Customer Service Centres

The Corporate Centre at 273 Main Street, Bairnsdale is the only centre open to the public. Open: 8.30 am to 5.00 pm

All other centres are expected to reopen by Monday 13 January.

Residents are asked to direct fire-related enquiries to our general number: 03 5153 9500

Recreation centres and outdoor pools

Orbost Outdoor Pool - closed.

Bairnsdale Outdoor Pool:

Lap swimming 6.00-8.00 am;
recreation swim 4.00-6.00 pm

Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre:
open 6am to 9pm

Lakes Entrance Aquadome: open 9am to 6pm.
Group fitness classes in morning only. No creche.

Waste services

Monday 6 January kerbside collection: *Marlo and Newmerella.*

No kerbside collection in *Cann River.*

Bairnsdale Landfill: open 8.00 am to 5.00 pm

Libraries

Bairnsdale Library: 9.30 am to 6.00 pm

All other libraries are closed.

What we don't know

Road closures

For road closures, use the Vic Traffic app or website, <https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/>

Property specific information

Many parts of East Gippsland remain inaccessible. At this time, Council does not have access to property specific information and is unable respond directly in fire affected locations.

Damaged council infrastructure

Council looking for your help to identify damaged or destroyed bridges. This will help staff plan the repairs and rebuilds.

You can report damaged bridges and other council assets by email to (feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au), phone or using the Snap Send Solve app. It's free and you can include photos.

Stay in touch with us

Keep up to date with our services and activities:

Website: eastgippsland.vic.gov.au

Facebook: @EastGippyShire

Twitter: @egsc