

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 19 February – Edition 20



The Today Show will broadcast live from Lakes Entrance this Friday, sharing some of the stories of the bushfires and recovery from across East Gippsland.

You're welcome to turn up and join Karl Stefanovic and Allison Langdon on the Esplanade (across the road from the Bellevue) from 5.20am.

There will be competitions, food, coffee, fun activities for the family, camels, horses and Delta Goodrem performing live!

Channel 9 is also in Mallacoota this week working with community members to re-establish some damaged public infrastructure.

The Today Show is crossing 'live' to Mallacoota during the week, and on Friday tune in for the unveiling of the new infrastructure.



FRIDAY  
LIVE FROM LAKES ENTRANCE

Temporary structures for rebuild

Council recognises that people who have unfortunately lost their homes in the bushfires will need somewhere to store materials etc., as part of the rebuild process.

Council wants to make this as easy as possible and will provide an exemption for residents who have lost their home and wish to have a temporary structure on their land to assist with their rebuild.

We are working through how we can apply that permit exemption, and the period the exemption may be in place.

Council also recognises each situation is individual. It is important that we work with individuals in order to understand and best meet their needs.

For anyone who has not lost their home, relevant approvals are required for temporary buildings such as shipping containers. For land use suitability and amenity, it's important that temporary buildings, such as shipping containers, are not excluded from the need for relevant permits.

Council's land use planners can help in confirming whether a planning permit will be needed.

VicRoads bushfire assistance in Mallacoota

VicRoads staff will be in Mallacoota next week to help with your registration and licencing enquiries.

No appointment is needed, just visit Council's Mallacoota Customer Service Centre as follows:

- Today: 1pm to 5pm
- Thursday 20 February: 8.30am to 5pm
- Friday 21 February: 8.30am to 12pm

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 19 February – Edition 20



Wandering stock reminder

We appreciate how the significant loss of agricultural fencing is presenting many challenges for farmers across East Gippsland, including containing livestock on private property.

As a result of damaged fences, Council has, expectedly, received an increase in wandering stock complaints.

Our rangers will do whatever they can to ensure the owners of stock can contain their stock without intervention. During this time, as farmers re-establish boundary fences, we are taking a lenient approach.

In most cases, we can contact the owners and have the wandering stock contained on private property. Impounding livestock is the absolute last resort for Community Laws officers.

With some major and local roads reopening, please be reminded that wandering stock onto roads is a public safety risk.

If anyone has any questions about wandering stock, please contact Council's Community Laws team.

Forge Theatre hosts free recovery concert

Council is holding a free bushfire recovery sing-along concert celebrating the sounds of the '60s and '70s early next month.

'Superstars Celebration' will be hosted by Lisa Budin Price. The audience will be encouraged to sing their hearts out during this hour-long spectacular on Thursday 5 March from 11am.

There will be a free morning tea from 10.30am.

The show is tipped to be packed with the music, stories and swagger of two of the most exciting decades in music.

Tickets are free but bookings are essential. Book now by calling 5152 1482, visiting eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/forgetheatre or at Bairnsdale or Lakes Entrance Visitor Information Centres, Council's Customer Service Centres, or at the box office.

Buchan-Orbost Road re-opens

Council, with its partner agencies and contractors, have been working hard to restore roads and provide access to community members across the municipality. On Monday, the Buchan-Orbost Road was officially opened to the public.

It is important to obey changes in speed and note access is still prohibited on many minor roads, this includes the Parks Victoria's network of roads and tracks that come off main roads.



Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

19 February – Edition 20



Message from the Mayor

There is something very special about our community.

Visiting, and revisiting, residents, businesses and communities impacted by the bushfires I am continually filled with a great sense of pride. This community-first mindset, and support we are showing for one another, will be needed as the phases of recovery roll through over the coming weeks and months.

Over the past week alone, this sense of community spirit and celebrating East Gippsland has come to the fore.

Council staff, with business and community representatives in Mallacoota, have gone above and beyond to sensitively re-open the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park (from today) and provide support, and a way forward, for just one aspect of the town.

In Omeo on Saturday morning, I was present for Freedom of Entry Ceremony with the 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment. This group has been operating out of Omeo and providing essential support and aid since 16 January. Granting permission to a formed body of armed men and women is a centuries old tradition that signifies a mark of trust, friendship and confidence held between the regiment and the community.

The Canni Creek Picnic Races on Saturday were a great example of how a community, doing it tough, rolled up its sleeves and put on an event that will go down in the history books. It will be remembered by the locals for how they achieved the feat in the face of adversity. It will be an “I was there” moment for the many visitors who watched the horses gallop past the charred winning post.

I was at the Fire Fight Australia concert live site at Sarsfield on Sunday and how this community has

come together in the face of adversity is inspiring. The bushfires are making Sarsfield more connected and stronger.

However, we must not underestimate there will be a lag time in how some residents and communities quantify the impact of the events of the past few months, and how they respond.

This was particularly evident on Sunday evening in Lakes Entrance at a CFA board meeting (in East Gippsland to support our community), when brigade captains from Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale provided a raw and emotional recount of their experiences of the never-to-be-forgotten days and nights over the New Year period.

Our recovery efforts are starting to change gear.

Council has been working tirelessly with community to provide early recovery services, and with Bushfire Recovery Victoria and Grocon now on the ground we will start to see the clean-up of house sites.

This is significant. It will trigger the next phase in recovery for many people.

To finish, our region has received considerable media attention during the bushfires due to the magnitude of what we have all lived through.

The silver lining is that we are ‘on the map’ and the goodwill continues with businesses and other organisations committing support our region, and media and promotional campaigns encouraging people to visit.

As we are fast approaching the March long weekend, school holidays and Easter, I look forward to seeing towns and businesses across East Gippsland showcase how much we have to offer.

There’s lots of work to do in community-led recovery, advocacy to build on, and places and experiences to promote.

- Cr John White, Mayor

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 19 February – Edition 20



Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park re-opens

The Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park is re-opening to existing bookings in stages from today:

- Today: Blocks 5 and 6
- Friday 21 February: Blocks 3 and 4
- Monday 24 February: Blocks 2 and 1

From Wednesday 26 February the whole park will re-open for new bookings.

Opening the park in stages allows us to meet caravan park regulation requirements, manage safety, and support the community.

We are accepting new bookings from March 1 2020. All existing bookings will be honoured.

For more information, visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/mfhp

Replacement birth/marriage certificates

If your identity documents have been destroyed, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria will replace them for free (Victorian certificates only). Call 1300 369 367.

Community Recovery Committees

Community Recovery Committees help individuals and communities get back on their feet.

Bushfire Recovery Victoria's website has information on the committees, including the role of the committees, how they will be supported and where they will be located.

The website also has a form for people who want to express interest in joining a Community Recovery Committee.

For more details see the 'Help your community' page at www.br.vic.gov.au



The bling of the visiting 2020 Melbourne Cup trophy was a welcome addition to the Canni Creek Picnic Races on Saturday. Mayor John White chatted with two-time Melbourne Cup winning jockey (1972 and 1980) John Letts at Buchan and Gelantipy Racing Club's big day. Congratulations to all involved for a top-notch event!

Community Recovery Hubs

Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) will set up Community Recovery Hubs in partnership with Council. BRV is looking for your feedback on the locations of the hubs, which are proposed to be in: Bairnsdale, Buchan, Cann River, Lakes Entrance, Mallacoota, Omeo and Orbost.

To give your feedback, call 1800 560 760 or email connect@brv.vic.gov.au.

For more information on the Community Recovery Hubs, see the 'help your community' page at www.br.vic.gov.au

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

19 February – Edition 20



Bushfire Recovery Centre

24 Service Street, Bairnsdale. Open Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5pm, Sat 8.30am to 1pm.
Phone: 03 5153 9500

A place for all your bushfire-related enquiries. Please bring identification such as a Medicare card or rates notice and bank details for assistance payments, if applicable. If you have general council enquiries, please go to our other Bairnsdale offices.

Mobile Recovery Service

Representatives from council and other organisations are visiting communities to provide recovery information. Please bring identification and bank account details. The upcoming schedule is:

Today

Club Terrace – letterbox, 11am to 2pm

Thursday

Anglers Rest – Blue Duck Inn, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Cassilis – next to Mt Markey Winery, 2.30pm to 4pm

Friday (dependent on road/fire conditions)

Goongerah – public hall, 11am to 12pm

Bonang – community hall, 1.30pm to 3.30pm

Monday 24 February

Marlo – adjacent to Marlo General Store, Argyle Parade, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Wairewa – community hall, 2pm to 3.30pm

Tuesday 25 February

Combienbar – community hall, 11am to 1pm

Thursday 27 February

Genoa – community hall, 4pm to 5.30pm

Friday 28 February

Benambra – community hall, 11am to 1pm

Property clean-up program

The clean-up program covers the demolition and disposal of all buildings destroyed or damaged beyond repair by the bushfires. This includes homes, sheds and outbuildings, commercial buildings and public buildings.

It may also include the removal of fencing, trees and vehicles, but only where it is necessary for the safe clean-up of destroyed buildings.

The Victorian Government has contracted Grocon to conduct the clean-up. This program is voluntary and free for eligible property owners. You do not need to be insured.

Clean-up works are expected to start this week in some areas.

Personal protective equipment kits

Personal protective equipment kits are available for residents returning to inspect their property when it is safe to do so. The kits include:

- Disposable coveralls
- A disposable P2 mask
- Sturdy gloves
- A plastic garbage bag to dispose of the used protective equipment
- Information sheets about returning home safely and using your personal protective kit

Extra P2 masks will be available to go with each kit as it is likely more than one mask will be needed.

The kits are to be used strictly for fossicking for keepsakes, they are not for asbestos removal or for asbestos clean-up.

Kits will be available at community meetings and from the Bushfire Recovery Centre.

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 19 February – Edition 20



Dial Before You Dig talks

Last week East Gippsland Shire CEO Anthony Basford met with Dial Before You Dig CEO Ben Howell to discuss the vast bushfire recovery and reconstruction process. The CEOs discussed Dial Before You Dig's offer of essential resources to assist Council and residents for the next two years.

Dial Before You Dig is a not-for-profit organisation established 30 years ago to protect homeowners and workers from unnecessary risk when digging and excavating. This assistance will allow workers to safely excavate without running the risk of striking underground infrastructure.

Mr Basford said Council was very appreciative of the offers of assistance and looks forward to working with Dial Before You Dig and thanked them for their generosity.

Bulk billed psychology sessions

Trauma can impact people in different ways. Children are particularly susceptible to stress. The toll of stress can often take a while to manifest.

If you or someone you know are feeling overly worried, irritable or having trouble sleeping, talking to a psychologist may help.

Early intervention can be the key to preventing more serious problems further down the line.

Rural Health Connect is providing bulk billed psychologist sessions. You will be able to talk to a psychologist through video conferencing from home.

Sessions can be done outside of business hours. Please visit www.ruralhealthconnect.com.au or call 0427 692 377 for more information.

Mental health support forums

Mental Health Foundation Australia is hosting three forums to support the mental health of people affected by the bushfires. The forums are free.

The first forum will be on Monday 24 February at Lakes Entrance Golf Club, 6.30pm to 8pm, featuring Professors Peter Barlis and Greg Murray.

The second forum will be on Monday 30 March at Bairnsdale Sporting and Convention Centre, 6.30pm to 8pm, featuring Emeritus Professor Bruce J. Tonge and Professor Jayashri Kulkarni.

The third forum will be on Monday 27 April at Bruthen Mechanics Hall, 6.30pm to 8pm, featuring the same speakers as at Bairnsdale.

More information: 1300 643 287. Book at www.trybooking.com/BHYUF

Bushfire Case Support Program

The free Bushfire Case Support Program provides practical support for bushfire affected people.

Support can be provided face to face, over the phone or at a location that suits you.

To access this program or find out more call 1800 560 760 - 8am to 6pm weekdays and 9am to 5pm on weekends

Email: bushfirerecovery@windermere.org.au

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 19 February – Edition 20



Financial assistance

This information is divided into support available for: individuals and property owners, businesses and agricultural properties.

Individuals/families and property owners

Budget Direct: is offering grants of up to \$20,000 for community groups or organisations to repair or replace damaged facilities and or equipment that aren't covered by insurance.

To find out if your organisation or group is eligible and to apply, visit

www.budgetdirect.com.au/landingpages/bushfire-recovery-fund.html

Emergency water assistance: if you need emergency water assistance contact South East Water on 131 851. Eligible permanent residents in the declared bushfire affected areas of East Gippsland will be provided a tank water flush and top-up of 5,000 litres.

Electricity: Contact AusNet Services if you are trying to reconnect, understand outage lengths and to keep up to date with changing issues around electricity. Call their Bushfire support line: 1300 561 171 or visit the website,

www.ausnetservices.com.au/Misc-Pages/Bushfire-Support

Red Cross: People can now apply for three kinds of immediate assistance at

<https://www.redcross.org.au/grants> or 1800 RED CROSS (1800 733 276).

- An additional \$10,000 payment to support people whose homes were destroyed extending the total amount available to \$20,000 per household
- \$7,500 for people who were hospitalised for more than two days as a result of the fires,

with grants helping to cover out of pocket medical and other related expenses

- \$5,000 for homeowners whose homes have been structurally damaged and require repairs to make them safe for people to live in.

Emergency re-establishment assistance: is available if your primary place of residence is uninhabitable for more than seven days because of an emergency. It provides up to \$42,250 per eligible household experiencing financial hardship.

Re-establishment assistance is available to people who do not have building or contents insurance.

If you think you may be eligible call 1800 961 054.

Small business relief package: The Federal Government will provide top-up grants to eligible small businesses and non-profit organisations. The program is uncapped, so businesses and organisations that have sustained damage from the fires can access up to \$50,000 in funding (tax free).

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 fastest way to claim is over the phone. Call 180 22 66, or visit

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

Disaster Recovery Allowance: Support for people who can show they have lost income as a direct result of the bushfires. Claims close 30 June 2020. For more details call 180 22 66 or visit the website, www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/victorian-bushfires-december-2019-disaster-recovery-allowance

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

19 February – Edition 20



Agricultural properties

Grants of up to \$75,000 per farmer are available to assist with immediate recovery activities needed to rebuild primary production enterprises. Grants can be accessed to help primary producers who have lost most of their farm assets and help remote primary producers with transport costs.

To register your interest, visit ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

Farm fencing

The Victorian Government will help upgrade fences for landholders repairing damaged or destroyed fences between private land and National Parks, State Parks and State forests.

Farmers can upgrade fences with concrete posts and be better able to exclude pests. The government will pay half the cost, up to \$5 a metre.

An assessment of the property and the fence must be completed before works are undertaken or payments can be made, and landholders will continue to pay labour costs and half the cost of materials. Call DELWP on 136 186.

Farm fencing burnt by bushfire: Your insurer or organisations such as BlazeAid can help cover the cost of these fences either financially or with in-kind help. Information on BlazeAid can be found on BlazeAid's Facebook page or their website, blazeaid.com.au

Farm fencing destroyed by firefighting

The Victorian Government will pay the full cost of your fences damaged by fire agencies.

Farm fencing next to state or national parks

The Victorian Government will meet 50 per cent of the cost of materials to replace or repair fencing between your land and national/state parks, and state forests destroyed or damaged by bushfires.

To claim for fencing destroyed by firefighting, and/or for fencing that adjoins national or state parks or state forests call **136 186**. You will be asked some questions and verification is needed.

Emergency water access

People affected by the bushfires can access emergency untreated water supplies at **Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve** and **Goose Gully, 90 Balfours Road, Lucknow**.

For more information visit www.srw.com.au/east-gippsland-fires/ or phone (03) 5139 3100.

Wildlife

You should not try to catch injured wildlife. For information about what to do if you find injured wildlife, please call: 1300 322 060 if you are near Bairnsdale or 1300 322 056 if you are near Orbost, or visit www.wildlife.vic.gov.au

Victorian Land Registry Services

Victorian Land Registry Services will waive all property title and search related fees for properties damaged by bushfire.

If you have been affected by the recent bushfires and would benefit from access to land and property information from the land titles register, please call the registry on 03 9102 0402 or email VLRsbushfiresupport@victorianlrs.com.au to discuss how they can assist you.

Stay in touch with us

In addition to this newsletter, we also produce regular video updates and livestream community meetings, which are available on Facebook @EastGippyShire or our YouTube channel, EastGippyTV.

Website: eastgippsland.vic.gov.au
Phone: 03 5153 9500