

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 26 February – Edition 23



Handy resources available

To help people and businesses in their recovery, there has been a lot of information shared amongst our community.

It can be overwhelming to keep track of it all.

Our Community is hoping to make it easier for everyone to be aware of the grants on offer for bushfire relief.

Their website lists both national and state-based grant programs.

The page has useful information for individuals, small businesses, firefighters, farmers and wildlife carers. Go to:

www.fundingcentre.com.au/bushfire-relief-grants

Likewise, the Committee for Gippsland has a Bushfire Recovery resource on its website.

The various links provide a snapshot of the important campaigns, resources and initiatives in place to help businesses get back on their feet.

Find information on support, business, tourism and more. Go to:

www.committeeforgippsland.com.au/bushfire-recovery-for-gippsland-businesses/

Clifton Creek Farms N' Fences



Clifton Creek Community Hall hosted a Farms N' Fences fundraising and friendship night last Friday. Organisers declared the event very successful. The evening included children's entertainment, live music, food and giveaways. The event was supported by businesses, local and from further afield, and raised money to help replace farm fences in the local area.

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

26 February – Edition 23



Genoa and district barbecue - tomorrow

A community event will be held at Genoa Community Hall on Thursday 27 February with a Lions Club barbecue from 5.30pm.

Some services will be available from 3.30pm at the hall, including council's mobile recovery service from 4pm to 5.30pm. A mobile children's and youth van will also be available with fun activities.

Combienbar and Bonang roads re-open

Combienbar Road and Bonang Road are open. Council has been working hard to restore roads and provide access across the municipality.

Very significant work from Council is working with Regional Roads Victoria in relation to assessing the impact on Council roads.

It is important to obey changes in speed and note access is still not allowed on many minor roads.

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 it as easy as possible for people who have lost their homes to have storage to help with the 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 permits. Council's land use planners can help confirm whether a planning permit will be needed.

Victorian Government bushfire inquiry

The inquiry's local community sessions are:

Bonang/Tubbut: Tuesday 10 March, (time TBC)

Bairnsdale: Tuesday 17 March, 6-8pm

Mallacoota: Wednesday 18 March, 6-8pm

Orbost: Thursday 19 March: 6-8pm

Cann River: Monday 30 March, 6-8pm

Bemm River: Tuesday 31 March, 11am-1pm

Lakes Entrance: Tuesday 31 March, 6-8pm

Buchan: Wednesday 1 April, 11am-1pm

Bruthen: Wednesday 1 April, 6-8pm

Omeo: Thursday 2 April, 6-8pm

Further details on venues, registering to attend, and other opportunities to provide views and experiences to the inquiry will be published on www.igem.vic.gov.au, and advertised in state and local media.

Wandering stock reminder

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

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

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

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

26 February – Edition 23



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

If anyone has any questions about wandering stock, please contact the Community Laws team.

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.brv.vic.gov.au

Bushfire Recovery Centre

24 Service Street, Bairnsdale. Open Monday-Friday 8.30am to 5pm, Saturday 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

Please bring identification and bank account details. The upcoming schedule is:

Thursday

Genoa – community hall, 4pm to 5.30pm

Friday

Benambra – community hall, 11am to 1pm

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.

Replacement passports

If your passport was lost or damaged in the bushfire, you may be eligible for a free replacement. No application form is required, only basic information to confirm passport holders' identity and that they were in an affected area.

Call the Australian Passport Information Service on 131 232.

Council can provide you with a letter to use as proof that your home was destroyed or damaged.

Mallacoota recovery webpage

A webpage has been developed on Council's website for Mallacoota and district bushfire recovery.

The page includes the recovery association's membership form and documents from Strathewen on disaster recovery.

This page is temporary until the association can establish its own online presence.

You can find the page at:

www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/bushfire

What is an insurance embargo?

Insurers often put embargoes on insurance policies to stop people buying insurance when the risks are high, or a disaster is already occurring, only to cancel the cover after the risk passes.

These embargoes are normal practice and usually apply to new policies. They are typically in place when events such as fires, floods and cyclones threaten certain areas.

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 26 February – Edition 23



Most insurers will renew existing insurance policies.

Some insurers may still sell a policy but may set out a time limit where they won't accept a claim against the policy.

If you are finding it difficult to get insurance, call the Find an Insurer on 1300 884 934. You can also call the Insurance Council of Australia catastrophe hotline on 1800 634 721 if you want to discuss your concerns further.

Bushfire Case Support Program

After a bushfire, sometimes people are unsure of what to do next. The Bushfires Case Support Program provides practical support for people who have been affected by the bushfires.

If you have provided your details through the call line, you will receive a call, and a visit if needed.

Gippsland Lakes Complete Health will provide services from Bairnsdale to Mallacoota and Windermere Family Support Services will provide services from Bruthen up the Great Alpine Road.

Case support workers can help you with:

- Discussing your needs and the next steps you could take
- Information and support to access recovery and mental health services
- Financial counselling and assistance with insurance
- Temporary accommodation
- Completing paperwork
- Advice for business owners
- A small amount of financial support to help with immediate needs.

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).

Business grants scam alert

There have been reports of people calling small businesses offering to help them submit applications for bushfire grants for a \$300 fee, advising this is the only way recovery grants can be accessed.

Bushfire support does not have a fee.



Repairs to the bushfire-damaged bridge at Reeds Road, Goongerah, were completed last Friday. The timber deck was replaced with precast concrete panels, spanning 13 metres x 4.2m.

Stay in touch with us

Phone: 03 5153 9500

Website: eastgippsland.vic.gov.au

Facebook: @EastGippyShire

Twitter: @egsc

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 26 February – Edition 23



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.

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.
- \$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.

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).

Concessional loans: of up to \$500,000 are also available to support small business, primary producers and non-profit organisations who have suffered significant damage to assets or significant loss of income as a direct result of the bushfires. Further eligibility criteria apply. To apply, visit ruralfinance.com.au or go to brv.vic.gov.au for a direct link to the application page. Applications must be submitted by 31 July.

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

26 February – Edition 23



Agricultural properties

A range of assistance is available for primary producers, including beekeepers and the wine grape industry. Visit Agriculture Victoria's bushfire recovery page for details:

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/current-incidents#support-available>

Grants of up to \$75,000 per farmer are available to assist with activities needed to rebuild primary production enterprises. Grants can 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 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.

Farmers in this situation can choose to upgrade fences with concrete posts to better withstand fires 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.

Claims

To claim for fencing destroyed by firefighting, and/or for fencing that adjoins national or state parks or state forests call **136 186**.