

# Bushfires 2019-20

## Community Newsletter

### 6 March – Edition 26



Bushfire Recovery Victoria will be hosting a community meeting in Orbost at 7pm next Tuesday 10 March at the Orbost Snowy Rovers Football Club's room.

At the meeting, BRV will be discussing the purpose of the Hub to be established in town, staffing and location, and a discussion about the community-led approach to long-term recovery.

This is not a formal meeting for the Community Recovery Committee – it is an informal discussion about how the community-led model can work. You can still be involved in the CRC if you don't attend this meeting.

The meeting is endorsed by East Gippsland Shire Council and a Council representative will attend.

### Caves re-open tomorrow

The Buchan Caves Reserve is ready to offer the popular underground cave tours from tomorrow, in time for the long weekend.

Visitors will be able to book a guided tour of either Royal or Federal Cave following the completion of geotechnical and other risk assessments.

Visitors can make the most of their stay this long weekend with access to the caves reserve grounds for picnics and barbecues, camping under the stars or an overnight stay at the historic Caves House.

Buchan Caves Reserve is one of 10 parks jointly managed with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation in Gippsland (GLaWAC). The Joint Management agreement recognises that the Gunaikurnai people hold Aboriginal Title and maintain a strong connection to Country

Parks Victoria and GLaWAC are looking forward to working on the future offering of the Buchan Caves Reserve following the recent Victorian Government funding announcement of \$2 million towards the restoration of the park's infrastructure.

### Clifton Creek School rebuilding survey

The Victorian Government is committed to rebuilding Clifton Creek Primary School, and it wants to hear from you.

A survey has been launched this week at [www.engage.vic.gov.au/clifton-creek-primary-school-rebuild](http://www.engage.vic.gov.au/clifton-creek-primary-school-rebuild) where you can have your say.

This is a chance to recapture all the great things about the school and develop an asset that will serve the Clifton Creek community into the future.

The questions in the survey are:

- What are the places or spaces at the old Clifton Creek Primary School that you value/like the most?
- What would you like to see in the rebuilt school?
- Is there anything else for the school architects to consider when designing the rebuilt school?
- A school building is a vital part of the community. What other roles in the community do you see this new facility being able to perform?

To have your say about the future of Clifton Creek Primary School, please complete the survey before Wednesday 25 March.

### Stay in touch with us

Ph: 03 5153 9500.

Facebook: @EastGippyShire

Website: [eastgippsland.vic.gov.au](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au)

## Bushfire Recovery Victoria visit



*Ken Lay, Chair of Bushfire Recovery Victoria, and Ewan Waller (BRV East Gippsland) visited Clifton Creek and chatted to community members about their experiences and the recovery journey on Wednesday. Mr Lay's two-day visit also stopped in at communities in Bruthen, Dinner Plain, Cobungra and Bairnsdale.*



*Bruce Guaran (Cobungra Station manager), Ewan Waller (BRV), Ken Lay (BRV), Sue Agnew (Council), Tony Kewish (local farmer), Graeme Symons (CFA Omeo District Group Captain), Daniel Plowman (local farmer) and Sarah Duncan (BRV) at Cobungra yesterday morning.*

## Planning for waste influx

A significant amount of waste has been generated from the bushfires and includes hazardous material, metal and wire, burnt green waste, damaged vehicles and trailers, melted plastics etc.

As such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to how this waste is collected, transported and disposed of.

Fire-damaged and destroyed house waste can only be removed by licensed asbestos removalists, such as Grocon or private contractors, and the disposal comes with a range of EPA requirements.

At this point in time Bairnsdale Landfill is the only landfill accepting bushfire waste from destroyed and damaged dwellings and sheds. This waste is defined by EPA as 'prescribed waste'. It needs to be wrapped and the landfill needs 24 hours' advance notice before taking the items to the landfill. If you have a contractor intending to deposit such waste, please ensure that they call Bairnsdale Landfill on 5152 6535 before removing it from your property. Other landfills are being prepared to accept this waste shortly.

Council is preparing a range of other bushfire waste disposal options for properties and waste not collected under the Grocon contract. These details will be announced next week and include how and where to dispose of green waste and garden waste that may have been burnt and how you can dispose of other burnt items that are not prescribed waste free (clothes lines, trampolines etc).

Council has negotiated a private contractor to collect stockpiled fencing wire. Locations have been confirmed at Wairewa and Buchan; however, Council is waiting on confirmation of more sites from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

All these arrangements will be advertised.

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#### Update on Grocon clean-up

Bushfire Recovery Victoria has indicated Grocon clean-up works will commence the week of 9 March.

Grocon is undertaking Bushfire Clean-Up Program works in East Gippsland and across Victoria on behalf of the Government. The program is free for all property owners, regardless of whether they are insured, and is jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments.

The program will continue to take registrations. In the past week, Grocon has inspected 212 properties in East Gippsland.

As at Wednesday 4 March:

- 570 properties registered for clean-up
- 268 property inspections completed

#### Information on safe clean-up works

BRV and Grocon have been working closely with Worksafe to ensure the clean-up will occur in a safe manner for residents, workers and communities. Getting the clean-up underway is a priority, but so is the need to make sure workers and locals aren't exposed to danger from contaminated waste and air.

All bushfire waste is classified as asbestos contaminated. Only Class A subcontractors / supervisors are certified and licensed to handle this waste.

Grocon received over 400 expressions of interest from local subcontractors to work on the program. Under Victorian law, only Class A licenced subcontractors/supervisors can be engaged by Grocon to handle bushfire waste.

Local subcontractors will be advised on how they can be employed as part of the clean-up process. We are confident that many of the clean-up crews

(including Class A subcontractors / supervisors) will be locally based.

Every day before works commence, sites will have undergone air monitoring for asbestos particles. Grocon is engaging the closest available air monitoring services for this requirement.

#### Offices opening

In the coming weeks Grocon will open project offices at 15 Hosie Street, Bairnsdale, and 57A Maurice Avenue, Mallacoota.

Community members are encouraged to call the team on 03 9631 8833 should they wish to discuss the clean-up with Grocon.

BRV has held community meetings in Omeo, Cobungra, Buchan, Bonang, Cann River, Genoa and Mallacoota.

#### Local subcontractors

As the clean-up program is funded by Commonwealth and Victorian governments, there are a range of qualifications and compliance requirements to ensure the safety of contractors, property owners and the environment.

Grocon is working with Class A certified contractors to engage local people and contact contractors who have registered to be part of the cleanup.

If you wish to confirm your registration, you can follow-up with Grocon by calling 03 9631 8833.

Contractors are encouraged to register their interest by visiting [grocon.com/bushfire-recovery-2020](http://grocon.com/bushfire-recovery-2020), emailing [victorianbushfirerecovery@grocon.com.au](mailto:victorianbushfirerecovery@grocon.com.au) or calling 03 9631 8833.

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#### Bushfire Recovery Centre

**24 Service Street, Bairnsdale. Monday-Friday 8.30am to 5pm, Saturday 8.30am to 1pm. Phone: 03 5153 9500 – please press 1 for recovery assistance.**

A place for all your bushfire-related enquiries. Please bring identification and bank details for assistance payments, if applicable.

*Note: The recovery centre is closed on public holidays.*

The mobile service is taking a break this week. We will advise of a new schedule soon.

#### GIVIT – online charity portal

East Gippsland relief agencies and communities were overwhelmed with generous offers of support and donations during and after the bushfires.

An online charity is now managing all offers of donated goods, services and funds. This includes corporate offers of assistance.

GIVIT matches the offers with people who need assistance – ensuring those most in need get exactly what they need, where and when they need it most.

GIVIT has a virtual warehouse and encourages donors to pledge their donations. This removes the need for frontline services to receive, sort, and store items. It also means unwanted items won't create a disposal headache in the future.

The way it works is:

Charities and organisations registered with GIVIT can search through the list of donated items and accept donations needed by the people they are supporting.

Donors then get an email with the organisation's contact details and they can connect with each

other to organise delivery or pick up of the donation.

GIVIT also accepts cash donations. 100% of funds received are used to purchase essential items as requested by local charities and services. GIVIT is committed to purchasing locally wherever possible to aid economic recovery of affected communities.

For more information, go to [givit.org.au](http://givit.org.au)

#### Victorian Government bushfire inquiry

The inquiry's local community sessions are:

Bonang: Tuesday 10 March, 2-4pm

Bairnsdale: Tuesday 17 March, 6-8pm

Wingan River: Wednesday 18 March, 11am-1pm

Genoa: Wednesday 18 March, 2-4pm

Mallacoota: Wednesday 18 March, 6-8pm

Tamboon: Thursday 19 March, 11am -1pm

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

Thursday 2 April as follows:

Tambo Crossing 9.30-11.30am

Ensay: 12-2pm

Swifts Creek: 2.30-4.30pm

Omeo: 6-8pm

Cobungra: Thursday 3 April, 9.30-11.30am

For details on venues, etc and other opportunities to have input, go to [www.igem.vic.gov.au](http://www.igem.vic.gov.au)

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### Ready for the long weekend

Businesses and communities are ready for visitors this Labour Day long weekend.

There is plenty on offer this long weekend, in our coastal and country towns and the High Country.

Some annual event highlights include:

- Hinnomunjie Picnic Races – Saturday
- Bairnsdale Tennis Tournament – Saturday to Monday
- Marlay Point Overnight Yacht Race- Saturday and Sunday
- Hooked on Lakes Entrance Seafood Festival – Sunday
- Orbost Agricultural Show (free entry) – Monday
- Various farmers' and craft markets

Check out what's on near you at [www.eastvicevents.com.au/](http://www.eastvicevents.com.au/)

### Campers return to Mallacoota

Visitors are steadily returning to Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park (right).

There are still sites available for this long weekend, and we're getting a lot of enquiries for the Wild Harvest Festival weekend in early April and the Easter school holidays.



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## A great Forge Theatre concert

Council held a free bushfire recovery sing-along concert celebrating the sounds of the '60s and '70s yesterday at the Forge Theatre in Bairnsdale.

The 'Superstars Celebration' will be hosted by Lisa Budin Price.

There was a free morning tea prior to the show and a great turnout enjoyed the show packed with the music, stories and swagger of two of the most exciting decades in music.



*Lorraine and Tom Hickey and Robin Huntington enjoyed morning tea prior to the concert. The Newlands Arm residents found out about the concert at the Paynesville Library.*

## Apiary industry recovery support

Apiculturists affected by the East Gippsland bushfires are invited to a drop-in session to discuss licence options and temporary site locations on Tuesday 10 March, 2.30-5.30pm at the Bairnsdale RSL.

Rural Financial Counselling Service staff will also be on hand to talk about the types of grants available.

RSVP and questions to:  
[gippslandregionalforestplanning@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:gippslandregionalforestplanning@delwp.vic.gov.au)

## Tonia Todman workshops

Australian author and radio and television personality, Tonia Todman will host bushfire workshops Bairnsdale, Tumbarumba and Bega.

Seminar topics include pets and bushfires, preparing your property, recovery and rebuilding, managing your mental health, and biophilic design important.

The Bairnsdale workshop will be held on Tuesday 10 March, 9.30am to 12.30pm, at Bairnsdale RSL.

## Emergency water assistance

Anyone seeking emergency water assistance from the bushfire affected areas should 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. For information on ash and tank water contamination see

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/what-we-do/emergency-information-and-support#factsheets>

## Community bores

Southern Rural Water is working with Council and others who manage community bores. Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve has a connection point for people to fill up a water 'cube' for transport for emergency livestock relief. Please limit use to 1,000 litres each so resources are not depleted.

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

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*Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria returned to East Gippsland on Tuesday, taking part in a business roundtable in Orbost. On Wednesday, the Governor met with the Mayor, Councillors and CEO, visited staff at Orbost Regional Health and toured Sarsfield. The Governor is pictured with Cr Mark Reeves and Mayor Cr John White in Orbost.*

## Construction industry meeting postponed

Council postponed its planned information session, being run in conjunction with Master Builders Victoria, yesterday afternoon at the Bairnsdale RSL.

The session for construction industry professionals was been postponed to ensure Council and other agencies have the best available information regarding bushfire rebuild provisions.

The post-bushfire rebuild provisions are yet to be announced by the State Government and were to be a critical component of the session.

We are acutely aware of how busy people are and the need to have useful and relevant information. Council is advocating strongly for this information to be made available as a priority for our community.

Once the rebuild provisions are announced we will move quickly to reschedule the session, and also set up community sessions.

## Financial assistance

**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](http://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).

- A \$20,000 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.

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**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 tax free funding.

**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](http://ruralfinance.com.au) or go to [brv.vic.gov.au](http://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](http://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](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/victorian-bushfires-december-2019-disaster-recovery-allowance)