

# Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 10 January - Edition 3



## Bushfire Recovery Centre

Open at 24 Service Street, Bairnsdale.  
Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

It's a one-stop-shop for bushfire-related enquiries.

Agencies on hand include Council, the Insurance Council, Victorian Council of Churches, Disaster Legal Help, Rural Finance, Agriculture Victoria and others.

This will information and support centre mobile to visit other communities, starting Monday 13 January.

You can also make fire-related enquiries by phone to 03 5153 9500 and our staff will help identify which services you may need to access.

General council enquiries: Corporate Centre, Bairnsdale

## Emergency information

Fire warnings: Vic Emergency app or website, [www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/)

Road closures: Vic Traffic app or website, <https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/>

## What we know

### Offers of assistance

Many people are offering to supply goods, services, or resources to help our community in recovery.

All offers are being captured.

Council and other agencies involved in the recovery will follow up these offers and call on people when we need what they have offered.

## Charity scams

Be wary of people seeking bushfire donations, many scams are starting to be identified.

Do not donate to people phoning or door-knocking for bushfire donations.

Do not donate to online fundraising apps like Go Fund Me, etc, unless you personally know the person who set up the fund and are confident funds will be used correctly.

100% of donations to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund go to Gippslanders.

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Find out how to donate here: [www.gerf.org.au](http://www.gerf.org.au)

## Trusted sources of information

It is crucial to only listen to official sources for information on fire activity and the work of authorities – emergency agencies, DELWP, Council and others.

For social media posts – check when it was posted. Activity on old posts may push out-of-date content to the top of your newsfeed, causing confusion and anxiety.

Check the source of information. If it is not from an official source, go to the official source to verify.

You can be confident information published or shared by Council is accurate.

# Bushfires 2019-20

## Community Newsletter

### 10 January - Edition 3



#### Emergency water assistance

Anyone seeking emergency water assistance from the bushfire affected areas should contact South East Water on 131 851.

South East Water is providing bushfire aid to residents in bushfire affected areas who are without drinking and domestic water supply due to tank contamination.

South East Water will be a 'one-stop-shop' as the initial contact point for affected residents who need emergency relief water, as well as coordinating the delivery of water across affected areas.

Eligible permanent residents in the declared bushfire affected areas of East Gippsland and some parts of the Wellington Shire 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 meeting visits

Councillors and staff have attended community bushfire meetings at Omeo, Buchan, Cann River, Nowa Nowa, Clifton Creek, Sarsfield (held in Bairnsdale), Mallacoota and Orbost over the past few days.

We've also called in on Bruthen and Lakes Entrance and have continued our presence in Bairnsdale, particularly around the relief centre, Incident Control Centre and our Recovery Centre in Service Street.

The resolve of all communities has shone through at all visits. We've also picked up on the different pressures being faced in this emergency and are responding in the best way we can.

We are live streaming many of these meetings on Facebook for those displaced by the fires (or for residents to watch later).



*Cr Mark Reeves chatting with Cann River CFA Captain Peter Stubbs on Wednesday.*

#### Road closures

During the State of Disaster, all roads become the responsibility of the Victorian Government. Bushfire affected trees are extremely dangerous and can be fatal. Council is not able to advise on when roads will be re-opened. Safety assessments are being undertaken by other agencies and the Australian Defence Force.

When road responsibility returns to normal, the highways and main arterial roads are looked after by Regional Roads Victoria, while Council looks after local roads and those in towns.

#### Economic recovery

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, together with Council, is working to identify impacted businesses and the supply chains.

# Bushfires 2019-20

## Community Newsletter

### 10 January - Edition 3



They have created a register to store information that will help them to understand the economic impacts of the fires as well as opportunities to support business and community to recover.

Regional Development Victoria will coordinate the register, through the Bushfire Recovery Centre in Bairnsdale.

#### **Destination Gippsland**

For tourism operators seeking business resources regarding planning, preparing, responding and recovery from an incident visit

<https://www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development/crisis-preparedness>

Destination Gippsland is conducting research on the economic impact of the fires to see how widespread the effect is. Email <mailto:janinehayes@destinationgippsland.com>.

## **What you can do**

### **Your health**

All fact sheets from the Department of Health and Human Services are available on the Better Health Channel,

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/bushfire-emergency-information>

The Better Health home page has a pointer to this bushfire emergency page. It has information on:

- Before a bushfire
- During a bushfire
- Clean up after a bushfire
- Financial assistance
- Mental health and recovery



*Mayor John White today had a visit from a group of young entrepreneurs from Melbourne who have chipped in more than \$180,000 to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund across two donations.*

### **Mental health**

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

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. It may be a good idea to see a counsellor or psychologist to help you process your experience.

Australian Psychological Society Referral Service:  
Call 1800 333 497

### **Financial assistance**

#### **DHHS Personal Hardship Assistance Program**

A Personal Hardship Assistance Program information line **1800 961 054** has now been set up for the Eastern Victoria bushfires.

This hotline will support affected Victorians by providing information on Personal Hardship Assistance Program, including eligibility criteria and

# Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 10 January - Edition 3



guidance as to where individuals and families can go for assessment.

The hotline is available 9am-5pm (7 days per week).

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.

### ***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, or the interior has sustained major damage.

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>

### ***Australian Government Disaster Recovery Allowance***

- Support for people who can show they have lost income as a direct result of the bushfires in Victoria in December 2019 and January 2020.
- If you're in East Gippsland, you have until 30 June 2020 to make a claim.
- For more information, visit the Department of Human Services website or contact the Australian Government Information Hotline on 180 22 66.

[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)

## **What we are doing**

### **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 areas are not yet accessible. See below for details:

#### **Customer Service Centres**

Open centres (open 8.30 am to 5.00 pm)

Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street, Bairnsdale

Orbost and Lakes Entrance are open for fire-related enquiries and a limited range of their usual services.

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

### **Rates**

Council is working through a range of options regarding rates and will keep the community informed as decisions are made.

#### *Direct debit arrangements*

If you have elected to pay rates by 10 instalments (direct debit), the next direct debit is due to be deducted from bank accounts on **15 January 2020** as per normal process.

If you need to cancel this arrangement, please tell Council in writing by either sending an email request to [feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au](mailto:feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au) or by

# Bushfires 2019-20

## Community Newsletter

### 10 January - Edition 3



completing the “Cancellation of a Direct Debit for Rates” form on Council’s website.

Contact Council on 03 5153 9500 if you have any concerns about any rate payments.

#### *Contact details*

If you’re in a position to provide changes to contact details or mail addresses, send this information to us by email, [feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au](mailto:feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au), or use the Change contact details on our website, [eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/forms](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/forms)

#### **Valuations**

Council is being updated with details of all fire affected areas. Council will arrange for the valuations of all impacted properties to be reassessed, to ensure that the rates for the 2019-20 rating year reflect the property’s current condition.

This means the value attached to improvements such as fencing and outbuildings, which unfortunately are no longer there, will be removed.

Once all impacted properties have been identified and assessed by the Valuer, supplementary rates and valuation notices, with adjusted charges for the 2019-20 rating year will be sent out to those property owners.

If you have already paid your 2019-20 rates or wish to continue to pay your rates (by payment arrangements, instalments etc) you will still have any rate adjustments applied to your account. You can choose to have the payments remain on your account as a credit or you can request a refund.

#### **Waste disposal – fire affected regions**

**No fire damaged waste will be accepted. We will let you know of arrangements for this waste as soon as possible.**

General household waste is free to drop off if you are in a bushfire affected area. These are items that would generally go in your red lid **general waste bin**.

**Food waste** is free to drop off for people affected by power outages. To access this free service, please show staff at the transfer stations your paperwork from an Emergency Relief Centre or your driver’s licence with your residential address if you did not access a relief centre.

Large items will still be charged, for example mattresses, ewaste, furniture and tyres.

*The following sites will be charging as normal:*  
Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Lindenow, Marlo and Metung.

This will be in place until further notice.

#### **These sites are closed until further notice:**

Wairewa, Genoa, Bendoc, Bonang

See [eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/sites](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/sites) for regular opening days / hours of other sites.

#### **Kerbside bin collection**

Put your bin out as normal. Collections are sometimes confirmed late in the day with not much time to notify residents.

Safety and road closures will mean some collections won’t occur.

#### **Raymond Island Ferry**

Ferry travel is restricted to residents with ferry passes, people already staying on the island and essential deliveries. No visitors or day-trippers allowed. This restriction will be reviewed next week.

#### **East Gippsland Livestock Exchange**

Sales will be held as scheduled from now on.

# Bushfires 2019-20

## Community Newsletter

### 10 January - Edition 3



## 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](mailto: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:

*Phone:* 03 5153 9500

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

*Facebook:* @EastGippyShire

*Twitter:* @egsc