

The Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund's 2020 Gippsland Bushfire Appeal has closed, bringing to an end the fund's biggest fundraising effort to date.

GERF president John Mitchell said the appeal received outstanding support within the region, all states and from countries around the globe.

"We'd like to sincerely thank all of the businesses, ethnic and community groups, organisations, families and individuals who have so generously given their time, money and extraordinary support to help East Gippsland communities.

"This is by far the biggest response we've ever seen to a GERF appeal," Mr Mitchell said.

"Most of the property impact assessments have been completed, so GERF can now proceed to disburse the remaining funds," Mr Mitchell said. GERF has also allocated at least \$1m for fencing and fodder assistance.

GERF is working with Bushfire Recovery Victoria, government agencies, Council, BlazeAid and Victorian Farmers Federation to ensure a coordinated assistance program is developed and agreed.

Mr Mitchell said about \$9 million of the \$10.4 million raised had already been distributed to more than 2,060 families or residents.

Supplementary payments have been to those most severely impacted.

For example, for all principal places of residence totally lost in the fires, a payment of \$17,500 has now been paid.

Orbost Landfill receives bushfire waste



In another milestone for our early bushfire recovery, Orbost Landfill received its first loads of bushfire waste this week.

Message from the Mayor and CEO

Our community has been experiencing uncertain times for longer than many other regions, but no one could be prepared for what we are now facing.

As you all know, the drought rolled into the bushfire disaster and we now have a global pandemic which, like the previous two events, has changed our everyday lives.

You may feel that we are isolated here in East Gippsland, but we are not. It is critical that we all perform our role to limit the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

We ask you all to keep up to date on the latest restrictions put in place by the Prime Minister and Victorian Premier. The only way to limit the spread and help our health sector manage the number of COVID-19 cases is to stay away from other people as much as possible.

Social distancing is essential. We must take this seriously – don't stand near others in the shops and only go out for essential supplies, and please do not buy more than you need.

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

27 March – Edition 32



Think about all the items you touch each day, and how many other people may also have touched them. Wash your hands often and avoid touching your face. Cough into your elbow and do not leave your house if you have flu-like symptoms.

To protect you and our people, we have closed a number of facilities and even outdoor assets like playgrounds. We did not make these decisions lightly. These decisions are based on the best health advice and a requirement to comply with Commonwealth and State directions under emergency provisions.

Our communities and businesses were hurting before now. But we are adaptable, and many businesses have adjusted their services where they can, such as eateries launching 'no contact' take away food services. Support our business community where you can, but make sure you follow social distancing and health precautions.

Sadly, the restrictions on trading that must be in place mean some businesses cannot operate at this time. We will do all we can to help businesses recover when this crisis abates.

We also learnt from the bushfires that in this social media age a lot of misinformation can be shared.

Please only rely on information from credible sources such as Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services and the Australian Government. Council will relay information from these sources to help share the message. Visit <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus> for the most up-to-date information.

Council and all available staff are continuing to work with our bushfire impacted residents and communities. In the face of the pandemic this will provide some challenges. However, if anyone can do it, it will be East Gippsland. We have shown time and time again we know how to stick together and are resourceful.

Please continue to reach out to us, via phone, email, website or through our social media channels.

- Cr John White (Mayor) and Anthony Basford (CEO), East Gippsland Shire Council

RSPCA Victoria offers support

RSPCA Victoria is calling on animal owners needing support with veterinary care, food, fodder and more to reach out for support in the wake of the devastating bushfires.

Whether it's food, water, shelter, property visits or even just some advice and a shoulder to lean on, we are here for the pets and people of Victoria – now and in the months and years to come.

Some of the things RSPCA Victoria can assist with include:

- Subsidising essential veterinary care for animals during the bushfire recovery period
- Providing food and fodder for pets, horses and livestock on hobby farms who need support – this may include covering the cost of supply and/or delivery via local stock agents;
- Providing water for animals whose owners are not being assisted by other agencies;
- Providing additional support as greatest needs continue to be identified.

If you need support with your animals, contact RSPCA Victoria's bushfire support line on 03 9224 2222 or fill out the contact form at www.rspcavic.org

EPA's role in bushfire recovery

The Environment Protection Authority has recently updated its website to help the community understand the EPA's role in bushfire recovery.

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

27 March – Edition 32



This is in response to enquiries about pest plant and animal control and fuel reduction burning – all of which are issues the EPA does not regulate.

To learn more, visit <https://bit.ly/2QMLr47>

Financial assistance

\$10,000 Small Business Bushfire Support Grants

These grants assist with the costs of maintaining businesses, including covering salaries and rents.

To be eligible, small businesses (including primary producers) in East Gippsland must have experienced a 40 per cent decline in revenue over a three-month period, compared to the previous year, as a result of the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires.

This grant is available to businesses who were indirectly affected by bushfire. Businesses who have already received other bushfire grants or concessional loans may apply.

The grant application process is short and simple.

You are not required to upload any financial documents if you don't have them.

To apply, visit www.ruralfinance.com.au or visit www.br.vic.gov.au. You can also call Bushfire Recovery Victoria on 1800 560 760.

Other financial assistance for individuals, businesses and farmers

For details of other financial assistance available:

- Contact the Bushfire Recovery Centre on 5153 9500, or visit the centre at 24 Service Street, Bairnsdale. Monday-Friday 8.30am to 5pm, Saturday 8.30am to 1pm.
- See February editions of this newsletter at eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/bushfire

Bushfire Case Support Program

The Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program can provide practical and personal support for people who have been affected by the 2019-20 Victorian bushfires. It is a free service. To access the Case Support Program, call 1800 560 760.

Individuals, families and emergency service workers from bushfire-affected communities can also access up to 10 free and confidential counselling sessions without a GP referral. To access the service in East Gippsland phone 1800 001 068 or email bushfiresupport@rav.org.au.

LifeLine - 13 HELP (13 43 57)

A dedicated support line for people living through bushfire recovery. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Beyondblue information line - 1300 224 636

An information line that offers expert information on depression, how to get help, and how to help someone else.

Safe Steps Family Violence Centre - 1800 015 188

Confidential support and information for women and children living with family violence.

Mensline - 1300 789 978

A telephone support, information and referral service, helping men deal with their relationship problems.

Kids Help Line - 1800 551 800

A 24-hour telephone service that provides phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

27 March – Edition 32



Bushfire inquiry sessions cancelled

All Inspector General of Emergency Management (IGEM) bushfire enquiry sessions have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information on the inquiry go to www.igem.vic.gov.au.

Mobile Recovery Service - cancelled

All mobile recovery service sessions are cancelled due to Victorian Government restrictions on non-essential travel and social distancing as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council will work with communities and other agencies to ensure you continue to receive information that would usually be part of this service.

Bushfire Recovery Centre

In the interest of public health and advice given by the Victorian Chief Health Officer, this centre is open by appointment only.

To arrange an appointment please call the team on 03 5153 9500, and press '1'

Through the Bushfire Recovery Centre, you can access financial and legal support services, financial and personal counselling, and business support.

Red Cross and Salvation Army representatives are available on weekdays. Referrals can be made to the following organisations: Disaster Legal Help Victoria, Windemere, Anglicare, and Rural Financial Counselling Service.

Businesses can also be referred to council's Economic Development team and Rural Financial Counselling Service for assistance.

Mallacoota and District Recovery Association

The association has updated information on the latest work of the association and pre-nomination information for those wanting to nominate for the committee.

To read this new information, visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/CootaRecovery

Regional Roads Victoria update

As of Wednesday 25 March, Regional Roads Victoria's bushfire recovery statistics are:

Arterial roads:

- Length of road damaged / impacted: 404 km
- Length of roads closed: 1160 km
- Length of roads reopened: 1117 km
- Length of roads currently closed: 46 km
- Fire effected roads inspected: 13

Other assets:

- Guideposts replaced: 11,345
- Signs damaged: 1023
- Signs repaired / replaced: 321
- Potholes repaired: 281
- Culverts cleared: 67
- Length of surface drains cleared: 31 km
- Number of bridges damaged: 2 bridges; 3 major culverts
- Number of bridges inspected: 50 bridges; 73 major culverts

Bushfires 2019-20 Community Newsletter 27 March – Edition 32



Rates waived for bushfire victims

Council is providing rate relief to two groups of ratepayers - bushfire impacted property owners and commercial/industrial properties. This follows on from rate relief already provided to drought-affected farmers.

Three years' rates - 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, will be waived for all properties where the main dwelling has been destroyed or is assessed as needing demolition as a result of the 2019-20 bushfires.

For years 2020-21 and 2021-22, the waiver applies until the date that the property is sold, transferred to new owners, or a new dwelling is rebuilt on the land, whichever comes first.

All properties classified as commercial/industrial will receive a rate rebate, as a percentage reduction, for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 rating years. The rebate will not apply to telecommunication, gas and electricity infrastructure and vacant land properties. It excludes any municipal or waste charge.

Ratepayers who are to receive a rate waiver or a rebate will be issued with amended rate notices soon. If any ratepayer requires further information on the proposed rate waivers and rebates, please contact Council on 5153 9500.

Grocon clean-up activities

Community members are encouraged to call Grocon on 03 9631 8833 or via email at victorianbushfirerecovery@grocon.com if they have any clean-up enquiries.

Project update

- 10 new properties registered this week, taking the total to 605
- 55 property inspections, taking the total to 367
- 8 property clean-up works commenced
- 12 crews will be on the ground this week

Consent deeds must be returned from property owners, and clean-up scheduling will then take place. Property owners will be notified at least 48 hours prior to clean-up occurring.

Buchan – 2 crews have been mobilised.

Mallacoota – 25 consent deeds were completed this week, and 2 properties commenced clean-up.

Bairnsdale – 18 consent deeds were completed this week, and 4 properties commenced clean-up. This week, Grocon estimates completing 4 properties and commencing a further clean-up of 2 properties at Club Terrace and Goongerah.

Grocon offices

Grocon staff are available to discuss clean-up at:
Buchan – 43 Main Road, Mechanics Institute Hall,
Mallacoota – Shop 2, 57 Maurice Avenue
Bairnsdale – 15 Hosie Street

Community members are welcome to attend these offices with any questions. Please make sure to follow social distancing.

Discovery: retrieving your items

'Discovery' refers to the process where owners search for items they wish to recover and keep from their bushfire-affected property.

Discovery will be offered and details of the process are currently being confirmed.

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

27 March – Edition 32



To undertake discovery, you can let Grocon know during your property inspection.

Clean up process

Property owners are advised to follow these steps to participate in the program:

- Register with Bushfire Recovery Victoria by calling 1800 560 760 or online at vic.gov.au/bushfire-clean-up-program
- Receive confirmation of your registration from Grocon via telephone or email.
- Grocon undertakes an inspection of your property where you'll complete a consent form.
- Grocon will then be in touch with a timeline for anticipated works.

Waste disposal

Prescribed waste – houses and structures

- Houses and structures (prescribed waste) can only be removed by Grocon or private contractors. Contractors must be licensed asbestos removalists and in Environment Protection Authority registered vehicles.
- All waste must be triple wrapped.
- Cost of prescribed waste is \$286 per tonne.
- 24 hours' notice must be given to nominated sites. The Bairnsdale Landfill – 5152 6535 – and Orbost Landfill – 5153 9500 – are our only sites accepting this waste at present.
- Council is working on the approvals and site preparation to open a section of the former Orbost Landfill to accept prescribed waste. This is about four weeks from being available.

Green waste

- Burnt green waste can be taken for free to the sites listed below until further notice.
- Tree prunings / branches / grass cuttings / stumps and logs less than .3m diameter can be taken to waste site for free.
- Pine posts, treated pine and chipboard can be taken to waste sites but will need to be separated and will be charged for at our normal landfill rates unless presented with a bushfire waste voucher.

Metal

- Burnt metal waste can be taken for free to the sites listed below until further notice.
- Clotheslines, white goods, trampoline frames, play equipment, water tanks, scrap metals are all accepted.
- Boats - no fibreglass boats accepted.
- Trailers with melted fibreglass are not accepted as scrap metal but will be accepted into landfill at the normal charge.

Green waste or household metal as described above will be accepted at:

- Bairnsdale Landfill – 5152 6535
- Lakes Entrance Landfill – 5155 2148
- Mallacoota Transfer Station – 0427 144 002
- Orbost Transfer Station – 0429 412 833
- Omeo Transfer Station – 0429 865 358
- Buchan Transfer Station – 0419 359 763

For addresses and opening hours, go to eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/waste

Bushfires 2019-20

Community Newsletter

27 March – Edition 32



Farm fencing wire waste

Sites have been set up by DELWP and council to stockpile agricultural metal/wire only waste.

Council has negotiated with a private contractor to collect this waste metal from stockpile sites listed below.

Fencing wire stockpile sites:

- Newmerella Recreation Reserve (western side of the showgrounds near highway, away from horse yards)
- Buchan: old sawmill, 2286 Bruthen-Buchan Road
- Omeo: 181 Depot Road
- Wairewa Transfer Station, Carl Smith Road
- Nowa Nowa: old railway station

- Cann River: old gravel pit off Cemetery Track

Free bushfire waste vouchers

- Council will be offering extra free waste vouchers to properties in the bushfire areas that have burnt items that are not included in the categories covered in this newsletter.
- Council's bushfire vouchers can be used for any bushfire waste, excluding prescribed waste as per the Grocon / private contractor clean-up requirements.
- To access a voucher, call Council on 03 5153 9500 to register your name and property details. The voucher will be posted to you.

RED CROSS DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY FUND

How your donation is making a difference

Funds raised since July 2019: \$180 million

On-the-ground disaster services

 \$5m for 24/7 support including evacuations, relief centres and outreach services (for this financial year)

Mid-to-long-term support

 \$70m to help people facing financial hardship to rebuild their destroyed homes

 \$18m to support community recovery for 3 years or more

 \$13.5m to be allocated to further unmet needs as they arise

Immediate assistance grants

 \$50m to support people whose homes were destroyed

 \$20m to help homeowners make urgent repairs

 \$1.5m for bereavement payments

 \$2m to support people hospitalised for injuries as a result of the fires

Up to 10 cents in the dollar will be spent on admin support costs, and we're working to keep it as low as possible.

10 March 2020

