

# Recovery Update



Welcome to the sixth edition of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority's community newsletter, Recovery Update. This regular newsletter will provide important information for bushfire affected communities. We hope you find it useful and informative.

## Rebuilding Advisory Centres

Two new Advisory Centres in Marysville and Kinglake will provide a one-stop-shop for people rebuilding homes that were destroyed in the bushfires.

From August, the centres will provide step-by-step guidance and advice on every stage of the rebuilding process, including permits and architectural plans, as well as advice on insurance, financial or legal matters.

Professionals with expertise in planning, building, and finance as well as councils, the Building Commission and insurance companies will have a presence at each Centre. A telephone information service will also be available.

The Centres will be open two weekdays and all weekend. Meeting rooms in the Centres will be available for community use after hours, free of charge.

A third visiting service will also be provided to support other affected communities including Gippsland, Bendigo, Horsham and the Yarra Valley. This roving service will include community information events, on the ground and on-line resources, and one-on-one advice and follow up visits by VBRR staff.

Premier John Brumby, who joined Authority Chair Christine Nixon in Kinglake to announce the new Centres, said people needed a lot of support to rebuild their homes.

"Understandably, rebuilding after the fires is an incredibly daunting process for most people and this Centre will provide all the information they need in once place," Premier Brumby said.

The Centres will be built on council owned land, and to new Bushfire Attack Level 29 standards. All material and labour for the new centres has been donated by around 60 Victorian businesses.

Authority Chair Christine Nixon thanked the many businesses and individuals who donated time, expertise, and materials to make the Centres a reality.

"From planners to architects, to building suppliers, construction companies and labourers - a magnificent effort has been made by all involved,

with the Beck Group coordinating this work through the Authority," Ms Nixon said.

"As they have throughout the recovery effort, Victorians are continuing to open their hearts and provide overwhelming support to affected communities."

Once the rebuilding effort is complete, the Centres will be handed to the community.

## Funding for bushfire memorials

Premier John Brumby recently announced 19 Victorian councils would share in \$2.5 million from the Community Recovery Fund to create memorials and commemorative events in bushfire affected communities.

Funding has been allocated to the Councils of: Murrindindi, Latrobe, Mitchell, Nillumbik, Yarra Ranges, Alpine, Baw Baw, Greater Bendigo, Wellington, Whittlesea, Cardinia, Corangamite, Hepburn, Horsham, Indigo, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, South Gippsland and Southern Grampians.

The grants provide communities with the chance to reflect and remember the impact of the devastating bushfires, and are an important step in the recovery process.

They can be used to create community memorials to remember the bushfire events, to support communities to acknowledge the scale, impact and loss as well as to acknowledge their pride and resilience during recovery.

Memorials might take many forms such as physical monuments, gardens, open spaces for reflection, landscaping, sculptures, or a commemorative event held to honour the spirit of the community during recovery.

Councils will work together with Community Recovery Committees and communities to determine what sort of memorials might be appropriate for each community, and where they might be located.

For more information, please contact your Community Recovery Committee.

## Architects Bushfire Homes Service

People looking to rebuild their homes after the February bushfires now have an important tool to help them.

The Architects Bushfire Homes Service offers bushfire affected people access to a range of house designs and one free consultation with an architect.

The house designs are tailored to comply with the new Australian standard for residential buildings in bushfire prone areas, and the architectural designs also provide sustainability benefits.

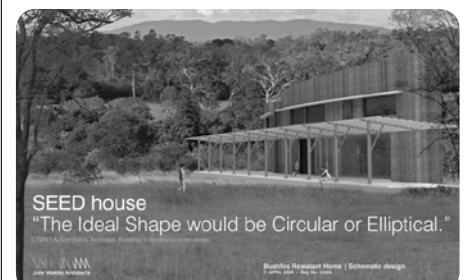
Provided by architects who are offering their services to assist people who lost their homes, the service is offered at no cost.

It is coordinated by the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects, and the Building Commission. The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority is helping to facilitate these offers to people affected by the bushfires.

If you are interested in registering to participate in this offer, please email [vic@raia.com.au](mailto:vic@raia.com.au) or call (03) 8620 3866.

This service will provide one free consultation with an architect who will provide advice on the suitability of the design of the house on your property and any modifications that may be required.

To view the Architects Bushfire Homes designs, please visit [www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au](http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au)





**Message From  
Christine Nixon**

Since the last newsletter the property cleanup program has surged ahead, with 2636 properties now completed and the project well ahead of schedule. Some property owners – believed to be up to 200 – have not registered for the free cleanup. I urge people who may have been putting off the cleanup to register as quickly as possible, or they may miss the opportunity to have their property cleared for free.

With the cleanup operation coming to an end, many are now entering the planning for rebuilding phase. For most people, this is an overwhelming time, with so much to do and so many decisions to make. Three Rebuilding

Advisory Centres in Marysville and Kinglake and a mobile service, will provide people with support and advice about every step in the rebuilding process. You can read more about the new Centres in this newsletter.

Winter is bringing new challenges for people rebuilding after the fires, but also new opportunities. Winter tourism will provide a significant boost to fire affected communities, many of which are gateways to Victoria's ski regions. The tourism support package provided by the State and Federal Governments will help communities make the most of the winter season.

## Free School Holiday Programs

Money donated to the Bushfire Appeal Fund will be used to provide free school holiday programs for around 30,000 school children in bushfire affected areas.

The Appeal Fund is providing \$5 million to the YMCA to run the specially designed programs for both primary and secondary school students in the Term Two, Term Three and summer school holidays.

These programs will be directly aimed at responding to the needs of fire affected students from government and non government schools, and combine recreation and learning activities.

Tutoring and homework support will be offered to primary and secondary students by qualified teachers, student teachers and tutors.

More than 16 locations servicing over eighty bushfire affected communities have been identified for programming based on perceived need and service gaps.

Premier John Brumby and Bushfire Appeal Fund Chair John Landy recently made the announcement in Marysville, and said the program would help families who may be struggling financially, and unable to take time off from work or rebuilding.

For further information call YMCA Victoria on (03) 9403 5000, or email [holidayprograms@ymca.org.au](mailto:holidayprograms@ymca.org.au)

## The Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service

Following the devastating impact of the Black Saturday bushfires the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service was established to assist people get their lives back on track. The service has now been operating for four months and is working with thousands of people.

Many community members don't know what case managers do, and are unsure about how case managers can help them.

Case management is a highly individualised service and a case manager's role is to meet with bushfire affected people, learn how the fires impacted upon them and determine what help is required for their particular situation.

This help can take many forms including:

- liaising with banks and insurance providers and helping to apply for grants or Centrelink payments
- helping to have blocks cleared and sourcing tree removalists for dead and damaged trees on properties
- talking to child care providers, employers and schools.

The list is long and covers a wide range of areas. Case managers can also talk to clients about how they are feeling and what is troubling them.

They can meet with bushfire affected people in their home to learn about what help is needed and negotiate the best way to keep in touch.

Some people will want regular visits at their home, while others may prefer to meet somewhere away from where they are temporarily living. Others may prefer regular phone or email contact.

These arrangements are made directly with each person.

Bushfire affected people can assist their case manager by telling them about any help they need, and their preference for how their case manager communicates with them.

While case managers are not experts in everything, they are highly resourceful and can follow up on a broad range of things for their clients.

All people directly affected by the bushfires are eligible to access the Bushfire Case Management Service, and if you haven't registered for a case manager, you can register now, or in the future.

To register for the service call the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service line on 1800 050 400.

Alternatively, speak to staff at your local Community Service Hub, who will register for you.

Once registered, a personal case manager will call you back within 24 hours and your support begins.

The Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service is led by the Department of Human Services Victoria in partnership with the Commonwealth, and is an integrated service of the Victorian Government and the Australian Government.

## Community Service Hubs

Community Service Hubs have been set up so people who have been directly and indirectly affected by the bushfires can access a wide range of information and services, and meet with members of their local community.

The Hubs are a 'one-stop-shop' where bushfire affected people can access the services and information they need as they work towards recovery and reconstruction. They are also a 'drop in centre' where bushfire affected people can catch up with fellow community members and work together on local recovery activities.

Following on from relief and recovery centres, Community Service Hubs have been set up in ten fire affected regions.

Each Hub is overseen by a dedicated Hub Captain whose role is to help bushfire affected people access the wide range of services and information available.

They work closely with Community Development Officers, Case Managers and Centrelink staff to ensure people's issues are coordinated with local community issues, and to connect people with the community development process.

Some of the services available at Community Service Hubs include the Bushfire Case Management Service, DHS personal grants, accommodation, personal support and counselling. Bushfire affected people can also access information on Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund payments and Commonwealth grants.

Additionally, advice is available from government agencies including Local Government, Centrelink,

Department of Primary Industries, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Department of Planning and Community Development and local water authorities, as well as public health and small business advice.

The Hubs can also give you information and access to GP services, and services such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Lions, Rotary and Apex, Anglicare, the Victorian Farmers Federation, Lifeline, legal services, the Building Commission, RSPCA, Telstra, local power companies and other groups.

In future issues of Recovery Update, we'll let you know what's new at the Hubs and profile some of the people who work there.

Hub Captain details are listed below (as at 17.06.09):

HUB	LOCATION	OPENING HOURS	CAPTAIN	PHONE	EMAIL
Alexandra	45A Grant Street, Alexandra	9am to 5pm, Mon to Fri 9am to 1pm, Sat	John Sainsbury	03 5772 2447	<a href="mailto:alexandrarecovery@gmail.com">alexandrarecovery@gmail.com</a>
Buxton	Buxton Recreation Reserve Corner Maroondah Highway and Mareeba Avenue, Buxton	1.30pm to 4pm, Mon to Sat	Robert Hall	03 5774 7114	<a href="mailto:buxtonrecovery@gmail.com">buxtonrecovery@gmail.com</a>
Narbethong	Next to the CFA 628 Maroondah Highway, Narbethong	10am to 12pm, Mon to Sat	Robert Hall	03 5963 7016	<a href="mailto:narbethongrecovery@gmail.com">narbethongrecovery@gmail.com</a>
Flowerdale	Flowerdale Community Hall 3050 Yea Road Flowerdale	10am to 5pm, Tues and Wed 1pm to 8pm, Fri 10am to 1pm, Sat	Leanne Pleash	03 5780 2704	<a href="mailto:flowerdalerecovery@gmail.com">flowerdalerecovery@gmail.com</a>
Kinglake	Kinglake Ranges Recovery Centre 19 Kinglake–Whittlesea Road, Kinglake	10am to 4pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 10am to 7pm, Wed 10am to 2pm, Sat	Helen Goodman	03 5786 1047	<a href="mailto:kinglakerecovery@gmail.com">kinglakerecovery@gmail.com</a>
Kinglake West	Uniting Care Church 1048 Main Road, Kinglake West	1pm to 4pm, Mon to Fri 10am to 2pm, Sat	Helen Goodman	03 5786 1047	<a href="mailto:kinglakerecovery@gmail.com">kinglakerecovery@gmail.com</a>
Marysville	ESA site, opposite Golf Club, Marysville-Buxton Road, Marysville	10am to 5pm, Mon to Fri 10am to 2pm, Sat	Ray Siegersma	03 5963 4371	<a href="mailto:marysvillerecovery@gmail.com">marysvillerecovery@gmail.com</a>
Whittlesea	Walnut Street, Whittlesea	9am to 5pm, Mon to Fri 10am to 2pm, Sat	Carmel Italiano	03 9719 1000	<a href="mailto:whittlesearecovery@gmail.com">whittlesearecovery@gmail.com</a>
Hurstbridge (including outreach to Strathewen and St Andrews)	Hurstbridge hub is under construction. The hub service is currently run from Nillumbik Shire offices, Civic Drive Greensborough	9am to 5pm, Mon to Fri 10am to 2pm, Sat	Lynn Naismith	03 9433 3111	<a href="mailto:hurstbridgerecovery@gmail.com">hurstbridgerecovery@gmail.com</a>
Traralgon South	Cats Drive, Traralgon South	10am to 5pm, Mon to Fri	John Worters	03 5195 5011	<a href="mailto:hubtraralgonsouth@bigpond.com.au">hubtraralgonsouth@bigpond.com.au</a>

## Managing emotional distress: Useful skills for recovery

*This article was written by Dr Susie Burke, Senior Researcher, Public Interest Team at the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and is the third piece in the series providing useful skills for recovery.*

Even after the danger of the bushfires has long passed, people can experience upsetting reactions, and these can go on for weeks, months or years. The distress can involve physical reactions, like a rapidly beating heart and sweating palms, and emotional reactions like feeling teary or anxious. These reactions often follow reminders of the bushfires, or come up in response to stresses in daily life. For some people, this emotional distress can lead to problems in relationships with family and friends that can affect mood, impact on health, and disrupt the ability to make decisions and get things done.

It is important to understand that distressing reactions are a normal part of recovery, and finding safe ways of expressing feelings is an important part of healing. Learning how to identify, understand, anticipate and manage these reactions so they don't feel so huge, uncontrollable and unpredictable, is something everyone can do.

### Four steps to managing emotional distress

#### 1. Identify the distress in your body

It can be helpful to identify where in your body

you feel things when you are distressed. Perhaps you clench your jaw or tense your shoulders when you're angry. Perhaps you blush, sweat or get butterflies in your stomach when you're anxious. Some people feel sick, or get headaches.

#### 2. Name the type of distress

Once you are able to identify where distress is located in your body, it can be useful to name the type of distress this signals e.g., 'I'm feeling anxious'.

#### 3. Anticipate triggers for distress

You can also try to work out what sets off your distress. Some triggers might be particular reminders of the fires, like noises, places or people you see. Some things might seem to have nothing to do with the fires but they set you off anyway, like the car not starting, or children arguing. The better you get at working out what triggers your distress, the better placed you are to plan how to manage it.

#### 4. Managing the distress

As you become more aware of the bodily signs of distress and the associated feelings, as well as the situations that trigger distress, you can start to practice skills to help manage the distress. These might include:

- learning how to relax your body, especially the parts that tense up under stress
- learning some breathing techniques to calm yourself down

- using calming self talk (e.g., 'This might be tough but I will get through it')
- if possible, have a friend with you for support before, during and/or after the stressful situation.

It takes practice to learn these skills, but every time you try them, you will get a bit better at calming yourself down.

Importantly, you start to see that you have more control than perhaps you realised over your reactions to stress, so they don't need to have such a disruptive impact on your life.

## Gippsland tourism funding

The Commonwealth and State Governments have announced \$300,000 in grants to support tourism in Gippsland as part of its \$10 Million package to boost tourism in bushfire affected communities.

The funding will support a range of events and campaigns including:

- A new campaign to increase visitors to Mt Baw Baw this winter
- Creative Gippsland – 100 arts and cultural events and activities
- Wilson's Promontory marketing
- Local, interstate and overseas marketing campaigns to attract more visitors to the region, including TV advertisements in southern NSW
- A boost for the "Inspired by Gippsland" brand campaign.

## COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

26 to 28 June

### Master Builders Building and Home Improvement Expo Melbourne Exhibition Centre, 2 Clarendon Street, Southbank

Visit the Master Builders Building and Home Improvement Expo to see 250 companies with the latest and best products. View the new releases and latest products for sustainable living, smart technology, solar power, bathrooms, building, flooring, landscaping and gardens, heating products, home services, kitchens, internal/external lighting, pools/spas, roofing, security, skylights, air conditioning and more.

For more information, visit [www.buildexpo.com.au](http://www.buildexpo.com.au) or call 9654 7773.

Sunday 28 June, 10.30am

### Phoenix Workshop Marysville Community Golf and Bowls Club, 956 Buxton-Marysville Road, Marysville

The Phoenix Workshop is a partnership between the community of Marysville and environs, government and other stakeholders, to develop options for a sustainable design framework for the new Marysville.

Options, ideas and concepts for a new Marysville will be presented and discussed with the community at a public presentation day to be held at the Marysville Community Golf and Bowls Club on the Sunday - finishing with a lunchtime barbecue. All are invited to attend.

For more information visit [www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au](http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au)

### 10 to 12 July Bush to Beach Retreat Cumberland Resort, Lorne

A weekend retreat for women affected by the February 2009 bushfires that will be entertaining, inspirational and fun will be held from 10 to 12 July.

Cost is \$80 all inclusive (normal cost \$700) - ladies must be 18+ and have a DHS registration number (blue form).

Only 350 places are available so get your application in quickly.

For more information please call 0414 255 384 or email [bush2beachretreat@hotmail.com](mailto:bush2beachretreat@hotmail.com)

### Saturday 18 July, 10am to 4pm Shire of Yarra Ranges – Rebuild, Regenerate, Renew Expo

### Lilydale Showgrounds, 27-29 Market Street, Lilydale

The Shire of Yarra Ranges is hosting an Expo to provide residents (bushfire affected and others considering renovation) with the opportunity to speak to building experts, local contractors and suppliers to assist them through the rebuilding process. Alternatively, if you are in the building industry and would like to register your interest in exhibiting at the Expo, please email [m.black@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:m.black@yarraranges.vic.gov.au) or call Mandy Black on 9294 6307.

### Sunday September 13 Degani Kinglake Ride

Novice, recreational and regular cyclists are invited to enjoy some of the best riding country Victoria has to offer. Starting and finishing at the Whittlesea Showgrounds, both the 120km and 70km rides will wind their way through tree-lined country roads before giving way to the rolling hills of the magnificent Kinglake National Park.

For more information visit [www.supersprint.com.au/events/degani-kinglake-ride-2009.aspx](http://www.supersprint.com.au/events/degani-kinglake-ride-2009.aspx)

## Regeneration of Victoria's forests underway



Helicopters that were used for water bombing during the February fires are now being used to spread mountain ash eucalypt seeds near Marysville, Kinglake and Alexandra. Unlike other eucalypt species, mountain ash are killed by fire and only regenerate from seed.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is overseeing a winter regeneration program that will spread about 3000 kilograms of seeds over about 3800 hectares of burnt forest, which otherwise would probably not regenerate and be vulnerable to erosion.

The program is expected to be finished by the end of June.

## Large turnout for Whittlesea building expo

The Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRAA) recently had a stand at the Bushfire Rebuilding Expo at Whittlesea on 23 May.

The Expo was an outstanding success with more than 2500 people attending.

Attendees listened to guest speakers from ArchiCentre, Consumer Affairs, University of Melbourne and Department of Primary Industries provide advice about new bushfire regulations, purchasing tips, garden recovery and land recovery.

## New CEO appointed to Bushfire Authority

Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRAA), Christine Nixon, recently announced the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer.

Ben Hubbard, who commenced at VBRAA on 9 June has the responsibility for the day-to-day functions of the Authority, and reports to the Chair.

"Mr Hubbard comes to this position with significant experience in both State and Federal administrations, working with a wide variety of stakeholders across governments," Ms Nixon said.

"We look forward to having him on board to lead the Authority in its reconstruction and rebuilding efforts over the next two years."

Until recently Mr Hubbard was chief of staff to the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and has held previous roles as a senior adviser to former Premier Steve Bracks and Labor leader John Brumby.

Chair of VBRAA, Christine Nixon attended the Expo and helped the Blacksmiths Association of Victoria forge copper and stainless steel gum leaves for their commemorative bushfire tree project.

A similar Expo will be held at Lilydale Showgrounds on Saturday 18 July. For more information refer to the Community Noticeboard listings.



## Stay informed

The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority is committed to keeping people informed about the latest developments in the recovery effort.

You can stay up-to-date by registering for the SMS service. Send an SMS with the words 'Update' and your postcode to 13 46 88, standard SMS charges apply to the initial registration SMS. (This service is not available on the Vodafone and 3 networks).

If you are on the Vodafone or 3 networks, you can register by sending an email to [yoursay@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:yoursay@dpc.vic.gov.au) or call 1800 240 667. Please provide the postcode of the fire affected area you would like information about.

### Sign up for Recovery Update

If you would like to receive the Recovery Update newsletter by mail or email, please email [yoursay@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:yoursay@dpc.vic.gov.au) with your mail or email details.

### Have your say

If you have a suggestion or would like to contribute to future editions of this newsletter, please email [newsletter@wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au](mailto:newsletter@wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au) or phone 9092 5875.