

Recovery Update



Welcome to the eighth 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.

Mobile Building Advisory Service Doing The Rounds



A new Mobile Building Advisory Service is proving popular with bushfire affected people since recently starting up.

The Authority's Service is located at nine of the Community Service Hubs on a rotational basis, six days a week.

During this time, experienced building professionals from the Authority will be on hand at the Hubs to provide rebuilding advice and information on behalf of the Authority, local government and the Building Commission.

Additional information will be available from the Advisory Service staff in relation to planning, finance, insurance, architects, drafting services and legal matters.

Appointments for the service can be made through Hub Captains and a roster of initial operating times is detailed below.

If you are interested in having the Mobile Building Advisory Service visit your town, please call 1800 240 667 to register your interest.

Additional Bushfire Counselling Sessions Available

Victorians directly affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires now have access to additional counselling support through the \$3.5 million Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Program.

The voucher program provides six counselling sessions to each individual, including dependant children more than five years of age, who have been directly affected by the bushfires.

No cash payment is required to access the service.

The program will run from 10 August 2009 to 10 August 2011 and vouchers can be used anytime between these dates.

Victorians eligible for the program include:

- Recipients of grants paid by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund
- People receiving or who have received Victorian Bushfire Case Management services
- Dependant children (over five years of age) of eligible people above
- Other people who have been directly affected by the Victorian bushfires.

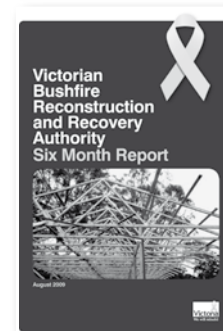
All households and individuals who received grants from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund have been sent a letter containing information about the program and an application form.

For more information call **1800 180 213**, visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal, or speak to your Case Manager or staff at your Community Service Hub.

Six Month Report Online

The Authority's Six Month Report has been released and is now available at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

The report details the Authority's progress in the six months since the February bushfires and covers a number of areas of the bushfire recovery effort including reconstruction, local economies, environment, grants and assistance and the next steps and goals for the Authority.



Hub	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Strathewen/Hurstbridge		9am-11.30am			1pm-4pm		
Alexandra	9am-11.30am				9am-11.30am		
Flowerdale		10am-12pm, 1pm-4pm				10am-2pm	
Kinglake	10am-12pm, 1pm-4pm		10am-12pm		10am-11.30am	10am-2pm	
Kinglake West		1-4pm	1pm-4pm	10am-12pm			
Marysville		10am-12pm, 1pm-4pm	9am-12pm		1pm-4pm		
Whittlesea	1-4pm		1.30pm-4pm	9am-12pm			
Traralgon/Morwell	10am-12pm						
Labertouche	2-4pm						

* Building Advisory Service operating hours are current as at 12 August 2009. Times are subject to changes.



Christine Nixon's message

It's now more than six months since Victoria was devastated by the worst bushfires in Australia's history.

As people begin to come to terms with the challenge ahead and making decisions about their future, it's important to remember that you need to take time out to do some of the things you have enjoyed in the past. As the Australian Psychological Society points out in an article included in this newsletter, it is important to 'down tools' from time to time and get some rest. You may find this helps when you want to resume working on your projects.

For many communities the reconstruction and recovery process is well underway and the

Authority is working hard to support your efforts. Some of our early progress includes:

- A total of 99 per cent of registered clean ups have been completed. People can still apply to have their property cleared if they haven't already done so by calling 1800 240 667
- Most families and individuals have settled into temporary accommodation. Temporary villages have been established at Flowerdale, Kinglake and Marysville, with more temporary housing being established at Whittlesea.
- A Mobile Building Advisory Service has been established to help those intending to rebuild in bushfire affected areas. For more information on the Mobile Building Advisory Service and its operating hours, please refer to the story on Page 1.

The Authority also recently released its Six Month Report detailing our progress since the February bushfires.

The report can be downloaded at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au or alternatively, please call the Victorian Bushfire Hotline on 1800 240 667 and they will print and mail a copy to you.

As the rebuilding process gains momentum, we will continue to consult and work with communities to ensure they can move forward and rebuild their lives and townships.

Small Business Advice Available

The February bushfires had a significant impact on the viability of local businesses – both those that depend on tourists and other visitors and those that mostly have a local customer base.

Business Victoria can help business owners who are starting to think about the future of their business, but are finding the idea of starting over again very daunting.

Business owners with questions about re-establishing a business, or alternatively using their existing business skills to establish a new business, should contact the Victorian Business Line on 132 215 or visit www.business.vic.gov.au

The Small Business Mentoring Service is also available to help. It's an independent, not-for-profit organisation providing experienced business mentors to Victorian businesses, including those facing challenging times.

Business owners can contact the service on 132 215 or visit www.sbms.org.au.

Bushfire Royal Commission Interim Report

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report was tabled in Parliament on Monday 17 August 2009.

Download a copy of the Commission's Interim Report and Executive Summary here from www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Interim-Report

Copies of the Report and Executive Summary can be ordered from Information Victoria on 1300 366 356 or bookshop@diird.vic.gov.au, and will be available from libraries in fire-affected areas from Wednesday 19 August.



Planning underway for Kinglake and Flowerdale Communities

Remake Kinglake

Nearly 200 people attended the Remake Kinglake community consultation day on 19 July, which was organised by the Kinglake Ranges Reference Group (KRRG).

Attendees included local residents, Christine Nixon, local Shire representatives including Mayor Lyn Gunter and Councillor Peter Beales, local State Member of Parliament Ben Hardman and Federal Senator Julian McGuaran.

The aim of the day was to generate discussion and ideas for the recovery of the Kinglake Ranges from the devastation of the February fires.

It was agreed that the priority was to restore the main facilities that had been lost in the town including Middle Kinglake Primary School, the kindergarten, maternal health centre, and child care centre.

Other needs for the town were also discussed including strategic plans for the future

development of the township areas, a community health centre, recreational areas and facilities and public transport.

Flowerdale Planning Day

Hosted by the Flowerdale Recovery Committee, the Flowerdale Planning Day on Sunday 19 July was attended by 120 people, including community members, Christine Nixon, Mayor Lyn Gunter and local State Member of Parliament Ben Hardman.

Priority issues raised included rebuilding of the kindergarten and community centre, access to transport services, water quality issues and mobile phone and free to air television reception.

Another critical issue for the community that was raised during the planning day was the 'reunification' of Flowerdale, through a single postcode and town name.

Following on from these planning days, the Flowerdale Recovery Committee and Kinglake Ranges Reference Group will formulate Recovery Plans that address their raised priority issues.



Legal Help Handbook

A legal help handbook for people affected by the February 2009 bushfires has been produced by Bushfire Legal Help, a group of legal service organisations who have come together to provide free legal support to bushfire affected people.

The Bushfire Legal Help Handbook covers a number of topics including insurance, property, fencing, debt, utilities, wills and estates,

Coroner's process, lost documents and family and relationships.

The handbook is available from www.bushfirelegalhelp.org.au and a limited number of printed copies are also available.

Individual fact sheets based on most areas of the handbook are also available in hard copy and online.

Order the hard copy fact sheets or handbook by emailing publication@vla.vic.gov.au or by calling 9269 0223.



A \$2.3 million investment by the State and Commonwealth governments will transform the Marysville Motor Museum into a small business hub, providing a major boost to the economic recovery of the area.

The facility will help get the Marysville community back on its feet by providing commercial operators with low-cost interim accommodation, as well as important retail services to the community as it rebuilds.

The Victorian Government has invested \$1.15 million to purchase the former museum and will take possession from 28 August 2009.

The Commonwealth Government has pledged \$1.2 million to fit-out the building, including construction of car parking facilities, lighting, signage and draining.

This funding will provide a community space, including administration, office space, a small

stage for community and farmers markets, displays, performing arts gatherings and visiting touring clubs.

It is expected the project will create up to 48 jobs, three traineeships and four work experience positions.

A valuable interim solution for the rebuilding process, the museum will also provide a long-term asset for the community with much-wanted open space.

A management committee including representatives from the local, Victorian and Commonwealth governments will be established to coordinate the fit out, operation and management of the facility.

The committee will be chaired by the Authority and include relevant community representatives.

Taking time for pleasurable activities

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) has developed resources to help people deal with the emotional and psychological aftermath of the bushfires. This piece was written by Dr Susie Burke, Senior Researcher, Public Interest Team at the APS.

More than six months after the fires, many people are feeling terribly tired and stressed, and they know that their daily struggle isn't going to be over any time soon. Doing activities that are enjoyable is very important as a way of gaining a sense of control and purpose in life, and for giving pleasure.

Indeed, one of the most successful ways of improving people's mood, giving them a 'lift', and restoring a sense of control, is to increase their activity, create routines, and increase the number of positive events in their lives.

Pleasurable activities are important for our health, and for our connections with other people.

It is important, too, that people have more positive experiences than negative experiences.

So, take some time out from the endless paperwork and the huge job that lies ahead, and give yourself permission to do some of the things you have enjoyed in the past – watching a DVD, having a day at the footy, catching up with a really good friend, going out for a night with the girls/boys, or just playing a game of Scrabble, if you can find a set.

Try to plan ahead so that you've got things to look forward to.

You may find as you start picking up some of the activities you used to enjoy before the fires, that you're not enjoying them as much as you used to.

This is very normal, and not a reason to give up. Sometimes after very traumatic experiences people's ability to enjoy themselves is diminished for the present.

It can and will come back, and one important way in which you can help is by doing things that give you a break from the everyday stress of cleaning up, rebuilding and recovery, but which also help to rebuild some normal routines and a sense of wellbeing.

And when you 'down tools' for a while and take time out for a bit of fun, you will probably pick up again when you're a little more rested, and you may even find that you make quicker progress with all of those jobs.

Building Commission's Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment

The Building Commission are offering free BAL assessments until September to assist bushfire affected property owners who are going to design and rebuild.

To be eligible for the service a site clearance certificate (or evidence that the site has been cleared) and a site plan are required.

To register contact the Building Commission on 1300 360 320 and choose option one.

Whittlesea Temporary Housing

Work is underway on establishing temporary housing for Whittlesea families while they rebuild.

The public open space at the rear of the tennis courts in McDonalds Park has been identified as the appropriate site for temporary accommodation.

Up to 13 one and two-bedroom self contained moveable units will be installed on this site over the coming months.

All bungalows will have separate driveways and will be serviced as per normal residential dwellings i.e. garbage collection, postage etc.

Workers will be preparing the site for the bungalows over the coming weeks and the bungalows are expected to remain on the site until March 2011.

Show you 'give a shirt'



If you would like a permanent wardrobe reminder of your contribution to bushfire affected communities, head to www.giveashirt.com.au

The cheeky and colourful T-Shirts have been produced specifically to support local communities affected by the February bushfires, and all profits will go to the communities named on each T-Shirt.

So far the T-Shirts have raised more than \$3000 for bushfire affected communities, so get yours today. To order your T-Shirt, visit www.giveashirt.com.au

A chance to recover precious memories

If you lost precious memories in the bushfires the MAP Group (Many Australian Photographers) could be able to assist you.

The MAP Group are offering to copy photos from friends or family into digital format and put the images onto CD.

If you have damaged photos salvaged from a burnt home they will also attempt to restore them.

The group is also offering to photograph families who have lost their homes and provide them with prints to restart their family photo collections.

This offer is at no charge for those who lost homes in the bushfires.

For further information, visit www.mapgroup.org.au or contact:

- Noel Butcher on 0419 727 777 or noelb@noelb.com
- Susan Gordon Brown on 0407 366 332 or susan@susangordonbrown.com.au
- Michael Silver on 0419 520 914 or mail@photonet.com.au

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Viewing of Draft Fire Operations Plans Your local DSE office Until Friday 28 August

The Draft Fire Operations Plans for 2009/10–2011/12 for all districts will be available for viewing from 1 to 28 August.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) together with its partner agencies prepare Fire Operations Plans for Victoria's parks and forests.

Planned burns and other fire prevention works such as strategic fuelbreaks are nominated and approved through this annual Fire Operations Planning process.

Planned burns don't prevent bushfires, but they do minimise the risk of intense bushfires which threaten communities and assets.

If you'd like to view and comment on the draft plan for your district visit your local DSE office; call **136 186** or visit www.dse.vic.gov.au

Environment Field Day St Andrews Saturday 29 August

Many landowners are concerned about vegetation on their property and if it will recover. There are many questions about the intensity of the burn and what impacts this may have had on the bush.

Dr Graeme Lorimer, Ecologist will present on this topic at 190 Mittons Bridge Road, St Andrews. The event will be held from 10am-12 noon with a light lunch to follow.

Please RSVP to **Lori Arthur on 9433 3211** or email Lorene.Arthur@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Melba Festival 11 to 13 September

Enjoy outstanding music from Australia's best new talents and the music worlds' most seasoned performers. The three-day festival of musical events are accompanied by award winning wines and stunning regional cuisine.

For bookings call **1300 765 584** and for more information visit www.melbafestival.com.au

Degani Kinglake Ride Sunday September 13

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

Mudgegonga Hall 121 Birthday Celebration and Masquerade Ball Saturday 19 September 2009

Celebrate the 121st year of the hall playing a vital role in the Mudgegonga community.

Join us in the afternoon for the re-enactment of the Opening Ceremony and in the evening for the Masquerade Ball with bush music and supper to follow.

For information please call **Coral Love on 5753 4557, Debbie Riggoni 5753 4581** or **Susan Youngberry 5753 4483**.

Fire Awareness Week 11-18 October

A Victorian Government Initiative to prepare all Victorians for fire awareness.

UPDATES

New Referral Card Mail Out

All bushfire affected people who received a grant from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund should have now received via the mail the new referral card for accessing material aid.

For more information about the new referral cards, visit the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority website at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au or call **1800 240 667**.

Timely reminder

Just a reminder that many of the fees, fines and charges that were put on hold in the months after the February fires have come back on line.

All State and Federal Government departments and agencies have hardship policies in place to help sort through any issues for bushfire affected people.

Please call them directly with queries or to discuss payment plans. You can also talk to your Case Manager about getting further support or advice.

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund

While \$317 million of the total donated amount of \$382 million has been allocated, there is still millions of dollars available for individuals to access.

Some eligible recipients have not yet applied for grants for a number of reasons, including still being distressed and unable to access funding at this time. However, applications for many of the gifts close on 31 December 2009, so people are encouraged to speak to their Case Managers or call the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on **1800 180 213** to apply.

Donated Holidays Still Available

A range of donated holiday accommodation options are still available to bushfire affected people. Tourism Victoria offers include up to two nights stay in caravan parks, B&Bs, motels and hotels in popular holiday destinations suitable for couples or families.

Contact your Case Manager or local Donations Coordinator to register your interest through the Donations Management System.

Holidays can be taken until 20 December 2009, subject to conditions and availability.

To view the accommodation offers available, visit <http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/bushfireoffer/accommodation/>

Recovery update newsletter available at Australia Post

The Authority has arranged with Australia Post to have the Recovery Update newsletter available in all Australia Post offices in bushfire affected regions. Pick up a copy next time you visit an Australia Post office.

Toilets and Showers

People staying in temporary accommodation on their properties can still register for portable toilets and showers via www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au or by calling **1800 240 667**.

Clean Up

More than 3000 properties have been cleared and the clean-up is essentially complete. A very small number of properties are yet to be cleaned up, and will be completed in the near future. Grocon are in the process of demobilising and the clean-up register has been closed. Property owners with clean-up queries should call **1800 240 667**.

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 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 or phone **9092 5875**.

Do you want to 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 or call 1800 240 667. Please provide the postcode of the fire affected area you would like information about.