

# Recovery Update



Welcome to the ninth 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.

## Strathewen Recreation Reserve to be Rebuilt

The bushfire-affected town of Strathewen has been the beneficiary of a partnership between the Rudd and Brumby governments and the private sector that will deliver a sports hub to the town.

The Australian and Victorian governments will join commercial developer Australand in a community partnership worth more than \$700,000 to build a sports pavilion and new cricket and tennis facilities.

The donation is one of the largest received by bushfire-affected areas and involves Australand contractors and suppliers donating their time, materials and skills to build the new community sport and recreation pavilion free of charge.

Australand is contributing in excess of \$500,000 to undertake the total design and construction of the new sports pavilion and car parking areas for the Strathewen Recreation Reserve project.

The Australian and Victorian governments are providing \$200,000 from the \$3 million set aside under the \$10 million Community Recovery Fund to support sporting clubs in bushfire-affected communities to recover.

Development of the master plan for the reserve is underway in conjunction with Sport and Recreation Victoria, Nillumbik Shire Council, Australand, VBRRA, Tennis Victoria, Cricket Victoria and local sporting clubs.

The facility design and reserve master plan is the result of extensive community consultation with the community, lead by the Strathewen Community Rebuilding Committee.

"This project is a significant step forward for the people of Strathewen and also a great example of how the private sector and governments can partner to deliver projects that help to rebuild and support our bushfire-affected communities," said Premier Brumby.

## New Operating Hours for Community Service Hubs

Operating hours at a number of Community Service Hubs are being modified to meet the changing requirements of local communities.

The revised operating hours will provide access to Hub services at times and locations that best meet community needs as the recovery process continues.

A number of additional outreach services are commencing where community need has been identified.

Some hubs will not be operating on Saturdays due to low demand, or will operate on occasional Saturdays depending on community need.

### The new Community Service Hub hours are:

#### Marysville

- Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm
- Saturday, 10am to 2pm on 3, 10 and 24 October
- Then one Saturday per month depending on community activity

#### Flowerdale

- Monday to Thursday, 10am to 5pm
- Friday, 1pm to 8pm
- Saturday, 10am to 2pm on 10 and 24 October
- Then one Saturday per month depending on community activity

#### Broadford

- Outreach from Flowerdale Hub, Wednesday 9am to 12pm

#### Whittlesea

- Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- Saturday, 10am to 2pm on 3 October
- Closed following Saturdays

#### Hurstbridge

- Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- Closed Saturdays

#### St Andrews

- DHS outreach from Hurstbridge Hub to St Andrews Recovery Centre by appointment

#### Strathewen

- DHS outreach from Hurstbridge Hub by appointment

#### Kinglake

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 10am to 4pm
- Wednesday, 10am to 7pm
- Saturday, 10am to 2pm on 3, 17 and 31 October
- Then one Saturday per month depending on community activity

#### Kinglake West

- Wednesday 1pm to 4pm
- Outreach from Kinglake Hub by appointment at all other times

#### Narbethong

- Monday to Friday, 10am to 12pm
- Closed Saturdays

#### Taggerty

- Outreach from Narbethong Hub, First Monday of the month, 4.30pm to 7pm

#### Buxton

- Monday to Friday, 1.30pm to 4pm
- Closed Saturdays

#### Alexandra

- Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- Closed Saturdays

#### Eildon

- Outreach from Alexandra Hub, Friday 10.30am to 1.30pm

#### Traralgon South

- Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm
- Closed Saturdays

#### Labertouche

- Outreach from Traralgon Hub, Wednesday 10am to 4pm



**A Word from  
the Chair**

## Premier Unveils Vision For Future Marysville

A community hub incorporating a new school, children's centre and community recreation space as well as diverse tourist facilities will all form part of the new vision for the Marysville and Triangle region, which was recently unveiled by Premier John Brumby.

The draft urban design framework for the Marysville and Triangle region outlines core building, services and community infrastructure as well as opportunities to create a distinct character for the town and its stunning surrounding natural environment.

The draft framework will be on display for public viewing in the marquee set up in Murchison Street, as well as a number of key locations within the Triangle, and feedback is sought until 10 October.

It can also be viewed at: [www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au](http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au) or [www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au](http://www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au), along with details of how to make a submission.

The final urban design framework will be incorporated into the Murrindindi Planning Scheme.

## Get Set for Fire Action Week

With summer quickly approaching all Victorians can prepare for the coming fire season by taking part in Fire Action Week, "a statewide working bee to minimise fire risk". Running from 11 to 18 October, the week is a reminder to all Victorians to work together to be as fire-safe and fire-ready as possible. It will be the time for people in Victoria, no matter where they live, to identify their risk and start their planning and preparations. Those in high bushfire risk areas should start developing bushfire plans, clearing their properties, attending fire safety community meetings and joining community fireguard groups. More details on Fire Action Week will be released closer to the date and for more information on how to get fire ready visit [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

Community Recovery Committees play an integral role in the recovery and reconstruction of bushfire-affected areas.

I would like to thank the 30 Community Recovery Committees throughout the state who have worked tirelessly with their respective local councils and the Authority to produce Community Recovery Plans, and identify their priorities for recovery.

The task of identifying and developing these plans has been the result of many hours spent by members of the community, councils and the Authority at meetings, planning days and workshops over many months, and all involved are to be commended for their efforts.

The plans recognise that communities have different needs and priorities and will rebuild and recover at their own pace.

They identify community priorities for the future including restoring or replacing fire-affected public and community infrastructure such as schools and halls, public reserves and parks, and include other initiatives that will help communities recover such as the establishment of youth groups and support services.

So far Community Recovery Plans statewide have identified more than 800 priorities.

The Authority is currently prioritising the projects within these plans for funding, with the initial focus on funding those projects that are a direct consequence of the fires and will help to support the economic and social recovery of communities in the short-term.

The aim over the next few weeks is to finalise incorporating priority projects from the community plans into a statewide plan for reconstruction and recovery, which will be the first phase in addressing community funding priorities.

Funds for these projects will include a mix of funding and support from the government, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and other corporate and philanthropic organisations.

Over the past eight months there has been a significant amount done with communities in partnership with all levels of government and we hope to continue this as we work towards the long-term recovery and reconstruction of towns throughout Victoria.

## Claim Your Solar Hot Water Rebate

People who lost their homes in the February bushfires can now claim the Federal Government's \$1600 solar hot water rebate.

The rebate is not usually available for people building new homes, but the Government has made an exception for homes destroyed in the fires.

Solar hot water can save a family up to \$700 on their energy bills and is one of the most simple and effective ways to make your home more energy efficient.

The special arrangements target the 2000 homes estimated to have been destroyed in the February 2009 bushfires, as well as the 1400 that were left uninhabitable.

The special arrangements for Victorian bushfire communities require that households:

- are rebuilding a home they lost in the fires
- are installing a solar or heat pump hot water system that is eligible for at least 20 renewable energy certificates
- are also installing a rainwater tank at the property that meets the criteria for the Victorian five star building standards.

For further eligibility information visit [www.environment.gov.au/energyefficiency](http://www.environment.gov.au/energyefficiency) or call the Energy Efficient Homes Package Hotline on 1800 808 571.

## New National Warning System for Victorian Communities

A new national framework for fire warnings for the next bushfire season is being implemented by Victoria following an agreement by all Australian States and Territories.

The fire danger rating system will have a new category of 'catastrophic' (code red) to warn communities of the risk of fires that are unpredictable, uncontrollable and fast moving.

Under the system the community will be provided with a better understanding of the level of bushfire threat on any given day based on the forecast weather conditions.

For those who can't ensure their own safety, advice provided to communities on a 'catastrophic' (code red) day will be that leaving early is the safest option.

The new fire danger rating has been developed using the Fire Danger Index (FDI):

- FDI 100 + is considered Catastrophic (code red)
- FDI 75 – 99 is Extreme

- FDI 50 – 74 is Severe
- FDI 25 - 49 is Very High
- FDI 12 – 24 is High
- FDI 0 – 11 is Low - Moderate

In line with the Royal Commission's recommendations there will be two types of warning categories for this bushfire season – a 'watch and act' message and an 'emergency warning'.

Watch and act messages will advise communities that there is a heightened level of threat and that they need to stay informed and vigilant.

Emergency warning messages will alert the community that there is an imminent threat and immediate action is required to protect life.

A new slogan, 'Prepare, Act, Survive' has also been agreed to nationally and will be used this fire season.

The fire and emergency services will use 'Prepare, Act, Survive' to educate communities about what they need to do in preparing and responding to bushfires.

## 10/30 Right To Clear Vegetation Becomes Law

The State Government '10/30' right' recently became law allowing landowners in bushfire prone areas to prepare their properties as part of their preparations for the upcoming bushfire season.

The aim of the '10/30 right' is to make it simpler for residents to clear vegetation around their properties to reduce risks posed by bushfires.

Under the rule landowners can clear vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of their house and any ground fuel within 30 metres of their house 'as of right' (without a permit).

The amendments also allow residents to clear all vegetation, including trees, for a combined maximum width of four metres either side of their property's boundary fence provided they have the permission of the neighbouring landowner.

Landowners are reminded to be aware of the potential for erosion and landslip when removing vegetation, particularly trees.

## Appeal Fund To Pay For Removal Of Hazardous Trees

A payment of up to \$4000 is now available to help residents in bushfire-affected areas meet the cost of assessing and removing hazardous trees on their private properties.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is making more than \$2 million available to ensure trees that have been deemed unsafe by a qualified arborist, can be safely removed.

This funding is based on the maximum average cost of engaging professionals to assess, fell and remove fire-affected trees from private property.

Landowners are not obliged to remove any trees or vegetation under these amendments and the amendments apply across Victoria, except in 20 Melbourne metropolitan councils, where vegetation clearing will continue to be limited by existing controls.

The amendments to the Victorian Planning Provision also include targeted planned roadside burns for high-risk areas and for people to be able to collect firewood 'as of right' from those roadside areas for two weeks prior to the burns.

Planned burns will only apply to roadside reserves selected by Road Management Authorities in consultation with the CFA and DSE because of an identified fire risk. People will also be able to remove fallen firewood without a permit from the nominated roadside road reserves for two weeks before the burns.

This firewood is for personal use only and can't be sold.

Only hazardous trees that pose a risk to humans and are therefore in locations occupied by humans are covered under this initiative.

For example, trees that are away from a residence or walkway at the rear of a property would not be eligible.

Property owners who have already undertaken this work may be reimbursed.

For more information, visit the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal) or call 1800 180 213.

## Kinglake Hub Open For Business Soon

Kinglake has taken another step on the road to recovery with plans underway for a Kinglake Business Hub.

Following the fires, many who ran businesses from their homes no longer had a place of business.

The Kinglake Ranges Business Network, a community network of approximately 100 businesses, is working to establish a facility where businesses can access basic business tools such as phone, fax and personal computer and have a place where they can meet with clients.

It is envisaged that employment advice, business advisory and mentoring and financial and legal advice will be provided from the business hub, which will be managed on a day-to-day basis by an administrator employed by the Business Network management committee.

Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, Christine Nixon, praised all parties who contributed to the project.

"The Kinglake Business Hub is a wonderful example of how different groups have been able to come together to support and meet the needs of affected communities," she said.

Swinburne University donated a large unused portable, which was repaired and refurbished, thanks to an \$80,000 donation from the Salvation Army.

The owners of a vacant parcel of land in the main street of Kinglake offered the use of the land,

which is being leased by the Murrindindi Council for two years.

The Tasmanian emergency services donated \$25,000 (the efforts of a fundraiser) towards the office fit out, computers and other office equipment, while Linfox donated furniture to the effort.

Once completed, the centre will enable locals who are still considering if they will rebuild or start again to mix with other business people, and to access the infrastructure they need to do business at a manageable cost.

For more information on the business hub email Brad Quilliam at [brad@rodagraphics.com.au](mailto:brad@rodagraphics.com.au)



Left to right: Christine Nixon, VBRR Chair; Greg Butters, Tasmania Fire Services; Cr Lyn Gunter, Murrindindi Shire Mayor; Brad Quilliam, Kinglake Ranges Business Network Chair and David Barker, Salvation Army, outside the Kinglake Business Hub.

## Beware of Rogue Traders



Rogue traders are bogus tradesmen who go from door to door seeking work such as painting and asphaltting.

They often pressure people into having the work done immediately for cash before disappearing without completing the job.

People who are involved in rebuilding or repair work as a result of the bushfires may be vulnerable to these unscrupulous characters, and should be wary of tradesmen who:

- offer services by door knocking or cold-calling
- have no proof of identity or references
- don't give written quotes
- pressure you to do the work immediately
- try to intimidate you
- only accept up-front cash payments
- offer transport to the bank to withdraw cash
- claim to have materials left over from a recent job nearby.

If you have paid for a job and are unsatisfied with the work done, call Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 558 181.

If you have handed money over to a tradesman who then disappears without starting or finishing the job, contact your local police.

Alternatively, if you know people who are rogue traders, call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Never agree to any offer from a tradesman that makes you feel uncomfortable, puts you under pressure or makes you feel unsure or fearful.

Shop around, get competitive written quotes, check references and demand a written warranty.

At a difficult time, the last thing you need is to be ripped off by a rogue trader.

## New Grant for Bushfire-Affected Farmers

More than 1000 farmers directly impacted by the February bushfires will receive one-off grants as part of a \$7 million Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund package to help them repair or replace destroyed or damaged farm infrastructure.

The grants of \$10,000 and \$5000 will be made available to support primary producers to boost their business viability after the fires.

They can be used to replace destroyed farm equipment or rebuild fencing.

The funding is in addition to assistance already delivered by the Appeal Fund to rural landowners affected by the fires through the Rural Property Assistance Scheme, which provided \$5000 to rural landowners with properties greater than two hectares affected by the fires.

For more information on the Primary Producers Repair and Restoration grant visit [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal) or call the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Hotline on 1800 180 213.

## COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

### Free horse gear

Highlands Saddlery in Kilmore has a collection of donated horse gear from around Australia available free to bushfire-affected people.

To arrange a time to look at donated stock call Lisa on Monday and Wednesday from 9am to 1pm on 0437 093 825.

Please bring your Referral Card.

Highlands Saddlery is located at 125 Northern Highway, Kilmore

### Tuesday 6 October, 6.30pm to 9pm

#### An Evening With Dr Rob Gordon Savoy Club, Myrtleford

Bushfire affected people are invited to an evening with Dr Rob Gordon. Dr Gordon is a clinical psychologist who works with survivors following natural disasters. He has researched the long-term personal and social effects of disasters, and understands the challenges bushfire affected people are facing following the February bushfires. The night is free and includes supper.

Please RSVP to Ovens and King Community Health Services by Tuesday 1 October on 5731 3500.

### Saturday 17 October, 6pm to 1am

#### Hoof Over Hills 2009

#### Flowerdale Community Night

#### 'Kinlochiel', 320 Moores Road, Flowerdale

A fantastic night of fun, food and entertainment. Spit roast organic beef, potatoes and salads from 6.30pm. Flowerdale Primary School Choir, Pete Auty and the Mason Twins will keep the crowd entertained with their unique poetry. Huge CFA raffle and drinks at bar prices. Tickets at gate. Adults, \$15 and Kids, \$5. All children under 18 years must be accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian at all times.

### Updates

#### Community Event Funding Still Available

Funding is still available for community events being held before 31 October, through a \$1 million Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund grant program.

So far more than \$300,000 has been provided to run almost 100 community events across bushfire-affected communities.

Over the past few weeks funding has been provided to the St Andrews Community Recovery Committee who held last Saturday's community celebration day, while the Alpine Shire Community Resilience Committee has received funding for events including a family film night and pasture recovery sessions.

Other funded activities include a community luncheon held by the Hazelwood-Jeeralang Community Recovery Committee and a range of activities arranged by the Mitchell Shire Community Recovery Committee, including art sessions, a family fun day at Clonbinane and a drive in movie and barbecue.

An application form must be completed by a community organisation and signed by a relevant Community Recovery Committee or the Municipal Recovery Manager. Applications are available to download at [www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au](http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au)

### Deluxe Getaways On Offer

The Victorian Holiday Offer is providing short breaks for bushfire-affected people.

The getaways, which include up to two nights accommodation, range from boutique B&Bs, luxurious five star hotels, stylish self contained apartments to chic resorts.

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/>

### New Website for Flowerdale

The Flowerdale Community has opened a new Integrated Planning Office and launched a website which provides locals with information about rebuilding. Check out the website at [www.builditback.org](http://www.builditback.org)

### Yarra Ranges Recovery Centre Relocation

The Yarra Ranges Shire's recovery centre has recently relocated with the Yarra Glen Community Relief Centre to the old IGA on Melba Highway, Yarra Glen.

This relocation now brings key recovery activities and services under the one roof.

The new centre's opening hours are:

- Tuesday to Friday, 9am - 4pm
- Saturday, 9am - 1pm.

For more information call 1300 368 333.

### Free Travel Passes Expiring

Free public transport passes were offered to people affected by the bushfires. The passes were intended to give people time to re-establish themselves, make new travel arrangements and provide financial assistance. These passes expired on 1 October 2009.

People on low incomes may be eligible for a Low Income Health Care Card through Centrelink. People who have one of these cards are able to purchase concession fares on public transport.

### Roses Offer from Heritage Roses Australia

Heritage Roses Australia (HRA) have offered to source cuttings of heirloom or historic roses for people who lost roses in the bushfires.

The cuttings will be provided free of charge, and can be posted via conventional mail from the start of winter 2010.

Case managers or clients can contact HRA on the numbers below to provide a list of roses that they lost and want replaced.

HRA will then locate them and post them off at the beginning of next winter.

The HRA members that are coordinating donations are:

Shirley Yates: [alanshirley@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alanshirley@optusnet.com.au) or 0423 364 698

Jill Collins: [normancollins@bigpond.com](mailto:normancollins@bigpond.com) or 9775 4549

### Free Horses to Good Homes

Misty Stebbing is working on making horses available for people who lost horses in the bushfires.

The horses are available free of charge and will require some re-education as they are ex-racehorses.

Misty will organise most of this re-education, and once the horses are at a basic level they will be made available to people.

The horses are appropriate for young adults and adults, but not for young children.

Misty asks that people that would like a horse email her their experience, age, height and the details of the horse that they lost in the fires, and she will contact them to try and match them up.

Misty's email address is [charon2@bigpond.net.au](mailto:charon2@bigpond.net.au) and her phone number is 0409 332 532.

### Closing Dates for Emergency Payments from Bushfire Appeal Fund

To ensure it continues to support people who need it the most, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has reviewed some of its initial gifts to determine whether they are still required.

As a result of that review, the Fund has announced the closure of three emergency gifts for individuals, which were made available in the days after the 2009 bushfires to alleviate immediate and acute distress.

The three gifts are:

- The Initial Home Dislocation gift, which allowed people to meet their immediate living expenses if their house was destroyed or uninhabitable for other reasons
- The Emergency Household Repairs gift, which was a short-term measure to help people make minor repairs to their damaged houses, such as repairing smoke or water damage
- The Emergency Tools of Trade gift, which supported people who lost equipment vital to their trade.

The closing date for these gifts is Friday 9 October 2009.

All other Appeal Fund gifts for individuals will remain open until 31 December 2009.

### 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.

### 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.