



BALLOT FOR STORE VOUCHERS

Due to the overwhelming demand for donated store vouchers, a new process for the distribution of David Jones and Ikea vouchers will begin this month.

Since the launch of the donations management points system in July approximately 1000 of these vouchers have been distributed to bushfire affected households through a needs-based system.

The Authority has staggered the release of store vouchers on a monthly basis to ensure people are able to access goods when they are ready.

While Donations Co-Ordinators have been working hard to ensure the vouchers are allocated as fairly as possible. To ensure the remaining store vouchers are equitably distributed to households across Victoria, a ballot process will be introduced in November.

Individuals, or Case Managers on behalf of their clients, are encouraged to contact their Donations Co-Ordinator to register for the ballot.

The David Jones and Ikea vouchers are targeted at those who lost material goods in the fires.

People will only be able to access either a David Jones or Ikea voucher, not both. If a person has previously accessed either voucher, they will not be eligible to be entered in the ballot.

For more information visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Support for small biz

Significant support for small business has been made available through a range of grants, mentoring and advice services, low interest loans and support for tourist marketing campaigns in fire-affected areas.

The Rebuilding Together Plan includes a Bushfire Investment Fund, which will help to kick-start business investment across the affected region.

The Fund will target investment opportunities, encouraging new jobs and economic growth in bushfire-affected communities.

The Plan also includes a \$600,000 Business Recovery Program which will assist small and medium-sized businesses to return to pre-fire operating levels through business recovery workshops, funding for business events, 'buy local' advertising campaigns and business mentoring services.

The Plan includes a range of other initiatives to stimulate economic recovery and generate employment with:

- \$7.7 million to restore and enhance tourist facilities in fire-affected areas and reopen National Parks

- \$9.2 million to rebuild Lake Mountain Alpine Resort

- \$2.4 million to establish an interim small business hub on the site of the Marysville Motor Museum

- \$1.7 million to provide additional support to agri-business and farming families

Thus far the State Government has provided support to small businesses and primary producers via:

- A \$51 million Business Support Package which includes grants of between \$5000 to \$25,000 to small businesses and primary producers, assistance payments worth \$5000 each to rural property owners, various special circumstances grants and low interest loans through the Rural Finance Corporation

- A \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package (funded in conjunction with the Federal Government) supporting marketing campaigns to encourage visitors to return to fire-affected areas and establishing public land tourism infrastructure

- Free business counselling and mentoring services to affected businesses by the Small Business Mentoring Service and the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and advice and information through Small Business Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and the Rural Finance Corporation

- Income Recovery Subsidy to people who lost their incomes as a direct result of the bush-

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CHAIR OF VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE RECONSTRUCTION AND RECOVERY AUTHORITY



fires. This Australian Government subsidy is available until November 10, 2009 (tomorrow).

A \$7 million package from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for grants of up to \$10,000 to primary producers and up to \$5000 for rural properties two hectares or more.

For more information on advice for fire-affected businesses, visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Second Women's Retreat

The second 'Bush to Beach' Women's Leadership Retreat will be held from November 13-15 at the Mantra Erskine Resort in Lorne.

Born from an idea of women affected by the February 2009 bushfires, the first Bush to Beach Women's Leadership Retreat saw nearly 400 bushfire affected women come together over a weekend in July in Lorne.

The retreat was community driven, supported by the Authority and private donors, and focused on nurturing leadership in women and creating bonds between affected women to support one another through the bushfire recovery process.

The purpose of the second retreat is to once again provide women with a break, some time to relax and most importantly, an opportunity to create bonds with other women and share experiences about their recovery.

The retreat is also full of other activities for women to let their hair down and have some fun; activities to be included are chocolate therapy, yoga, meditation, discussion groups, rebuilding information sessions and financial assistance sessions.

Women who missed out on the first Women's Leadership retreat are invited to attend, with 350 places available for those affected by the February 2009 Victorian Bushfires.

Registrations are online at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

VBRRA is also currently in the process of organising a retreat for men.

Hundreds of roads and tracks across Victoria will be re-opened tomorrow part of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria's seasonal road closure program.

DSE re-opens roads

This month the Department of Sustainability and Environment has opened many of the roads and tracks that have been closed since the bushfires.

Most roads closed since the fires in the Marysville and Murrindindi areas opened, following significant on-ground works by DSE crews, including tracks in 'The Triangle'.

Significant further works are still required to re-open all tracks in all fire affected areas, particularly the removal of dangerous trees and replacement of bridges and river crossings.

For detailed information on which roads and tracks remain closed due to fires, please refer to: www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrenfor.nsf/LinkView/6D34AEF92FC3A5AECA257561000430C444A3546C0C6BD394A2569AA00787FA4

Scholarships funded

A range of partial and full scholarships are available from the ACPET Bushfire Education & Training Fund for residents affected by the February bushfires.

The scholarships are available in a variety of areas including multi-media, entertainment production and performance, IT, counseling and psychotherapy, business, hospitality, retail, hairdressing, fitness, bricklaying, healthcare and first aid.

A competitive selection process will be undertaken and scholarships offered to those applicants deemed by ACPET to be most suitable, on the basis of demonstrated interest and need.

Eligible applicants for this fund are primarily those who have received a Blue Referral Card from VBRRA. Eligibility of those who do not have a Blue Referral Card will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

For more information people can contact the ACPET Bushfire Education & Training Fund on 0408 881 917 or e-mail martin.broadhurst@acpet.edu.au

Rebuilding: next steps

Work is underway to implement the projects and initiatives announced as part of the \$193 million Rebuilding Together Plan to rebuild and reconstruct towns and communities impacted by the fires.

The two-year plan sets out the rebuilding priorities identified by local communities in their Community Recovery Plans and the funds committed by the Federal and State governments, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and corporate and philanthropic donors.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has provided support for 74 of the 123 projects identified by local communities in this phase of funding and will continue to work with the Authority in assisting with funding for remaining projects.

For full details of the Rebuilding Together plan visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Telstra upgrades

Following recent upgrades to mobile phone infrastructure in bushfire-affected areas, Telstra is urging residents to ensure they have the appropriate mobiles that can take advantage of the new coverage.

Telstra has advised that investments in the region only provide improved coverage on the Next G mobile network not the old GSM mobile network, and therefore residents should be aware of the different mobile phones have different capabilities.

Given the terrain of the region, we encourage residents take a look at the Blue Tick range of Next G mobile phones.

Blue Tick phones are recommended for rural handheld coverage and provide maximised coverage in remote areas.

Telstra also advises that it is important people check that their Next G mobile has a Next G SIM card inserted.

Inserting old SIM cards into new phones will not provide the coverage performance people are expecting, so it is important people ensure they have move their phone number across to a new SIM card.

Telstra says coverage performance can also be enhanced in many instances by using an external antenna. More information on coverage extension can be found at www.telstra.com.au/mobile/networks/coverage/maximise.html

Flowerdale outreach

Congratulations to the Flowerdale Recovery Committee for its win this week of the Forrester Research Award for Best Use of Social Media for Social Impact.

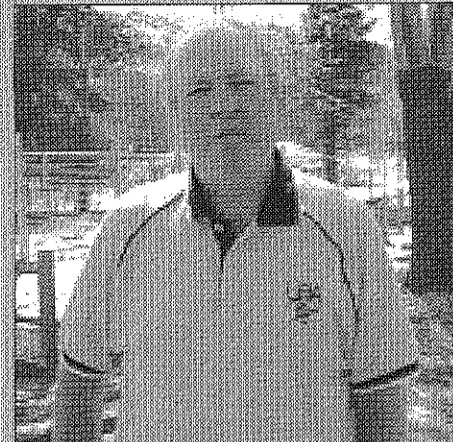
At the awards ceremony, held in Chicago, Flowerdale received the accolade for its use of blogs and video sites, in a co-ordinated social effort to raise money to help rebuild the town.

Social media has helped Flowerdale raise more than \$1.5 million, including donations of goods like cars.

It has also been crucial in keeping residents informed, liaising with media and government and maintaining a historical record that the Australian National Library wants to put into the national archive.

Briefs

'Go Marysville' TV



Barry Thomas, as he appears on TV in 'Go Marysville'

A television program with a focus on the reconstruction of Marysville is being broadcast on Melbourne-Geelong community television station, C31.

Barry Thomas is also making the program available on the Internet. The third episode may be viewed at www.gomarysville.com/video/31ep3.htm

Hubs change hours

Opening hours have changed at a number of Community Service Hubs:

- Alexandra. 45 Grant St. 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Closed weekends.

- Eildon. Outreach from Alexandra. 10.30am-1.30pm Fridays.

- Buxton. Recreation Reserve. Cnr Mareeba Ave & Maroonah Hwy. 1.30pm-4pm. Monday-Friday. Closed weekends.

- Narbethong. Next to CFA. 628 Maroonah Hwy. 10am-12 Noon. Monday-Friday. Closed weekends.

- Taggerty. Outreach from Narbethong Hub. 4.30pm-7.30pm. 1st Monday of the month.

- Flowerdale. Community Hall, 3050 Yea Rd. 10am-5pm, Monday-Thursday. 1pm-8pm, Friday. One Saturday per month depending on community activity.

- Kinglake. Kinglake Ranges Recovery Centre, 19 Whittlesea-Kinglake Rd. 10am-4pm, Mon., Tues., Thurs. and Fri. 10am-7pm Wednesdays. One Saturday per month depending on community activity.

- Kinglake West. Uniting Church Care, 1048 Main Rd. 1pm-4pm, Wednesday. Outreach from Kinglake Hub by appointment at all other times.

- Marysville. ESA site, opposite Golf & Bowls Club. Marysville-Buxton Rd. 10am-5pm, Monday-Friday. One Saturday per month depending on community activity.

- Whittlesea. Walnut St. Whittlesea. 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.

- Hurstbridge (including outreach to Strathewen and St Andrews). 36 Graysharps Rd. 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.

Tenders called

Murrindindi Shire Council is calling for tenders for works and services to service the needs of the Bushfire Recovery road damage rehabilitation and restoration. Tenders close at 3pm on November 25.

Works suspended

Works on the new permanent pedestrian crossing at Kinglake have been suspended by Vicroads. A Murrindindi Shire spokesman said the suspension is to clarify issued raised at a recent public meeting at Kinglake.

Alexandra Show

The Guns of Alexandra shearers' display will be part of the 126th Annual Show to be held at Alexandra this weekend. The Alexandra Show is a popular attraction with displays from the agricultural, horticultural and pastoral spheres.