

Friday 13 November, 2009

BUSHFIRE UPDATE

FROM CHRISTINE NIXON

CHAIR

BUSHFIRE RECONSTRUCTION AND RECOVERY AUTHORITY

GALLIPOLI PARK MASTERPLAN RELEASED FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Members of the Marysville community are urged to have their say on plans for Gallipoli Park, which will be on public display until December 9.

The Gallipoli Park Masterplan, which has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders including the Gallipoli Park Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, local community groups and the council, includes proposals for a new playground, life sculpture, garden and a skate park.

The park is a key local asset for recreation, events and commemoration and the Masterplan will guide both the restoration and improvement of Gallipoli Park's landscape and facilities.

Gallipoli Park plays an important role as the setting for important community education, recreation, health and meeting facilities and has a role in future fire emergency management.

Those interested in viewing draft plans and having their say are urged to visit the Community Kitchen at the temporary village, the Marysville Community Hub, the Marysville Golf and Bowls Club, Marysville Bakery or the Buxton Store. The plan will also be on display at Murrindindi Shire Offices, Alexandra and on the VBRR and Council websites.

Plans will be on exhibition until 9 December.

An information session is also scheduled for Tuesday 24 November from 5-7pm at Crossways Inn, junction of Buxton and Woods Point Road, Marysville.

Written comments should be lodged by 9 December 2009 and directed to 'Gallipoli Park Masterplan' PO Box 138 Alexandra VIC 3714 or email your feedback to mssc@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

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

PLANS UNDERWAY TO RESTORE MARYSVILLE STREETSCAPE

A major initiative to restore Murchison Street and other public areas in Marysville is set to begin, under a joint initiative between VBRR and the Murrindindi Shire Council.

Landscaping and streetscape works along Murchison Street, tree planting in key streets along the gateway to the town and civic works in the town centre will be key elements of the project.

Marysville's trees and gardens were a highlight of the town's identity and re-establishing these important assets will be a key to assisting the longer term commercial and tourism recovery of the township.

Planting and the works program are proposed to commence in late autumn next year, with funding sources currently being investigated.

Members of the community are invited to put forward their views at a meeting on Wednesday 18 November from 5pm to 7pm at the Crossways Historic Inn in Marysville.

Alternatively comments can be provided to Markus Terjung from VBRRA, at markus.terjung@dpc.vic.gov.au.

This follows significant work undertaken at the working bee held last month by the Narbethong community on the important streetscape project, which has been professionally designed and supported.

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK GETS THE TICK

The Marysville Urban Design Framework has been adopted by council's Section 86 Committee, and will become part of the Murrindindi Shire Planning Scheme in the coming weeks.

The hundreds of individuals and business owners who contributed to this worthwhile process are to be commended for their efforts.

The final UDF can be viewed at the council and VBRRA websites from next week.

COMPASSIONATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has announced a \$10.9 million Compassionate Financial Support scheme to assist those who lost immediate family in the fires.

A new \$3 million program to provide higher education scholarships to young people affected by the fires has also been announced.

Under the Compassionate Financial Support package immediate family members of the 173 people who died in the 2009 bushfires and are in financial hardship as a result, may be eligible to receive an immediate grant of \$25,000.

Some individuals who are suffering extreme financial hardship may then be eligible for a further needs-based payment of up to \$50,000.

Under the new \$3 million Scholarship Program, scholarships of \$15,000 per year will be provided for more than 60 students from towns and communities directly impacted by the fires who are financially constrained to undertake tertiary or vocational education from 2010 and beyond.

For further information contact the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on 1800 180 213.

JOBS EXPO IN WHITTLESEA

People from across bushfire affected areas are encouraged to attend the Whittlesea Centrelink Jobs Expo to be held at the Whittlesea Showgrounds on Friday 11 December, from 10.00am to 3.00pm.

Although the Centrelink Job Expo is a national strategy, the Whittlesea Expo will focus on supporting the bushfire recovery priorities across the region.

The Jobs Expo is intended to provide a vehicle for employers, industry groups, recruitment, training and education providers, and other key stakeholders, to participate in a local community event that provides people with access to job vacancies, information about options that enhance employability, training and education opportunities, as well as information about other related local support services.

Further information about the expo can be found at www.centrelink.gov.au.

SMALL BUSINESS INFO SESSION THIS FRIDAY

Representatives from the Rural Finance Corporation, Regional Development Victoria and other government agencies will be at a meeting in Marysville this Friday, to be chaired by the Member for Seymour, Ben Hardman.

Small business owners are invited to attend the meeting to find out more information about the support available and to provide information about the challenges facing small business in Marysville and the Triangle.

The meeting will take place at 10am at the Marysville Community Kitchen on Friday 13 November.

More support for small business was announced in the \$193 million Rebuilding Together Plan including 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.

This builds on the ongoing support that has been provided to the 301 small businesses and farmers in Marysville and Triangle, with government grants worth more than \$2.8 million provided since the fires.

A breakdown of the grants to the area shows:

- 859 small businesses received the \$5,000 initial clean up grant;
- 457 small businesses received the \$20,000 supplementary grant;
- 471 primary producers received the \$5,000 initial clean up grant; and
- 353 primary producers received the \$20,000 supplementary grant.

COMMUNITY SERVICE HUB CHRISTMAS OPERATING HOURS

Community Service Hubs will close at 1pm on Thursday 24 December for the Christmas break. They will reopen Monday 4 January 2010, resuming normal operating hours.

Please note, the Kinglake Community Service Hub will open on Saturday 14 November between 10am and 2pm.

Additionally, the Marysville Community Service Hub will open on 21 November between 10am and 2pm in line with community demand.

For urgent matters, please call the Victorian Bushfire Information hotline on 1800 240 667.

FIRST SOD TURNED ON MARYSVILLE SCHOOL

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike and Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction Bill Shorten today turned the first sod on the \$7 million stage one development of the Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub.

Work on the first stage, the new primary school, early learning centre incorporating a maternal and child health centre, has now commenced.

Design for the second stage is about to commence. This stage is proposed to including a community health clinic, a multi-purpose meeting space and recreation hall that will provide for meetings, functions and arts activities .

It will be home to the new school as well as kindergarten and children' s centre and health centre, providing top-quality education opportunities and health services for Marysville families.

The primary school is due to be completed before the beginning of term two next year.

NINE MONTH REPORT RELEASED

The VBRR quarterly report was released earlier this week, showing the rebuilding and recovery process is on track with:

- More than 1085 building permits approved, including houses, sheds and commercial buildings;
- In excess of \$30 million and more than 600 free counselling and mentoring referrals provided to affected small businesses and primary producers;
- More than \$660,000 to support 137 community events through the Community Winter Events program, which has been instrumental in bringing people together after the fires;
- 28 Community Recovery Plans developed by the 30 Community Recovery Committees that have been established;

- Approximately 766 visits by bushfire-affected people each to the Community Service Hubs that are continuing to operate in the most affected areas;
- Almost 6,300 kilometres of boundary fencing repaired or restored.

Significantly more activity will take place in bushfire-affected towns, as the \$193 million Rebuilding Together Plan takes shape over the coming months.

The Rebuilding Together Plan for the statewide bushfire reconstruction and recovery, which was launched last month, sets out the future projects and priorities identified by communities during many months of consultation and planning.

Communities have taken time to ensure that rebuilding and recovery projects important to their future recovery have been identified in this plan and will work closely with the Authority and government departments to implement these projects.

While work starts on the public and community buildings funded, and as businesses continue to re-open, we anticipate more people will make decisions around rebuilding their homes and moving back into their communities.

DONATIONS BALLOT ON TRACK

The first ballot for David Jones and Ikea vouchers has been successful and will continue into the future, as a result.

Due to the overwhelming demand for donated store vouchers, a new process for the distribution of these vouchers was introduced earlier 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 Coordinators 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 Coordinator to register for the ballot, if they haven't already done so.

STAY INFORMED ABOUT THE LATEST RECOVERY NEWS

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

Affected residents 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).

Those on the Vodafone or 3 networks 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.

MARYSVILLE WALKING TRACKS REOPENED TO THE PUBLIC

A forest walking track which links the Marysville temporary village to the township has been reopened to the public.

The seven kilometre walk takes in the remnants of an historic trestle bridge and is a great way for residents and visitors to see the regeneration of the forest.

A return journey between the village and the town is about seven kilometres and takes around two hours. Walkers are advised to stay off the tracks on windy and wet days due to the increased risk of falling trees and limbs following the fires.

DSE crews and contractors have made steady progress on works to reopen other walking tracks, despite the welcomed wet conditions over winter and spring.

Works on a separate project to upgrade the Beauty Spot Walk and allow assisted access to disabled visitors have also started.

Media inquiries: Melissa Arch 03 9092 5856