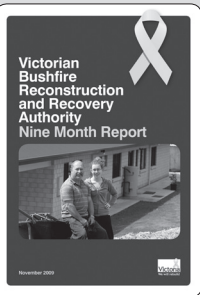


Recovery Update



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



Nine Month Report Released

The VBRRRA quarterly report was released last month and showed 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 provided 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 a week by bushfire-affected people to each of the Community Service Hubs that are continuing to operate in the most affected areas
- Almost 6300 kilometres of boundary fencing repaired or restored

The Nine Month Report is part of VBRRRA's commitment to provide regular progress reports to the community and the Victorian and Australian Governments on the reconstruction and recovery effort.

To view the report visit the 'publications' section at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Community Service Hub Christmas Operating Hours

Community Service Hubs will close at 1pm on Thursday 24 December for the Christmas break and will reopen on Monday 4 January 2010.

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

Bushfire Shelters to Require Building Permits

Victorians who choose to build a bunker or private bushfire shelter on their property are required to adhere to new regulations.

Interim regulations and an accreditation process for construction of bunkers or private bushfire shelters are presently in place, and will provide clarity to Victorians until proposed new national regulations are introduced in 2010.

The Victorian Building Commission has worked in partnership with the Building Regulations Advisory Committee to develop the regulation and accreditation process.

Bunkers are generally considered a place of last resort and cannot be relied upon to save lives, so the safest course of action is to always leave early.

Anyone who chooses to construct a bunker or private bushfire shelter is required to obtain a building permit and adhere to regulations and an accreditation process.

In order to obtain a permit to build a fire bunker or private shelter, residents need to purchase a bushfire bunker or shelter which is accredited, or satisfy a building surveyor that it meets the requirements contained in the regulations.

For more information on the bushfire bunker or private bushfire shelter registration and accreditation process, visit www.buildingcommission.com.au

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Update

Applications for gifts offered by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund are closing on 31 December 2009.

The generous donations by people from across Australia and the world allowed the Fund to develop a broad range of gifts to ensure the fairest outcome for as many people in need as possible.

All bushfire-affected individuals still in need of support and wishing to apply or enquire about gifts can call the Fund Information Line on 1800 180 213 or visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal

High Risk Schools to Close on Code Red Days

The State Government has released a list of 728 schools and children's services that will close on a day that is declared a Code Red (Catastrophic) Fire Danger Rating this fire season.

A register of schools subject to closure on a Code Red (Catastrophic) day has been developed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria.

The schools and children's services include many located in the 52 areas identified by fire authorities as being at high risk this fire season, as well as some schools outside those areas that may also be deemed at high risk due to geographic and environmental factors.

Further work is being done with some schools that may be added to the list, with information for schools and parents available on the Schools Bushfire Information line on 1800 059 866.

The register will allow for the pre-emptive closure of schools on a Code Red (Catastrophic) day following the Fire Danger Rating declaration by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM).

Ahead of a Code Red (Catastrophic) Day, the DEECD will issue immediate warnings to staff, parents and children through its website and through schools and children's services.

The BOM will declare in advance the Fire Danger Rating for each day and in each weather district in consultation with fire agencies. If a Code Red (Catastrophic) Fire Danger Rating is declared, the DEECD will issue a list of planned school closures immediately after receiving notification from the BOM of the Fire Danger Rating.

For the full list of schools, kindergartens and child care facilities determined by the DEECD to be at high-risk of fire danger, view the Bushfire At-Risk Register at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires



A Word from the Chair

It was recently my pleasure to attend Government House and along with the Premier, Governor of Victoria and representatives of the Rudd Government, thank hundreds of leaders from the 78 communities affected by the February bushfires.

The event recognised the hard work and dedication of 350 community members involved in driving the bushfire recovery effort via their respective Community Recovery Committees (CRCs).

Each committee included representatives from the community, and together with council members from the 21 bushfire-affected councils, worked with VBRRRA to identify visions for their towns, which were backed by Australian and Victorian government donors and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund to deliver rebuilding priorities.

I was particularly inspired by those CRC members who came together after the fires despite their own losses, to represent and support their communities and coordinate local recovery efforts.

I look forward to continuing to work with CRCs as the rebuilding effort progresses and we implement the projects and initiatives identified in the Rebuilding Together Plan, and I encourage you to stay abreast of your local CRC's efforts.

I am pleased to report that solid progress is also being made on the reconstruction front.

- In Marysville work has commenced on stage one of the Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub, the Gallipoli Park Masterplan has been released for public comment and the Marysville Urban Design Framework will shortly be adopted into the Murrindindi Shire Planning Scheme. The new retail centre has also opened with tenants including Foodworks, Bendigo Bank and Triangle Real Estate, and the Rebuilding Advisory Centre is progressing well.
- At Flowerdale, VBRRRA, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Murrindindi Shire, Mitchell Shire and representatives of the kindergarten and primary school committee have been working together to plan a new facility co-located at the Flowerdale Primary School, with plans nearing finalisation prior to going to tender documentation stage.
- Representatives of the Kinglake Kindergarten, Middle Kinglake Primary School and Kinglake Child Care Service, along with VBRRRA, DEECD and Murrindindi Shire have been planning the design of the Middle Kinglake school with architects, and the design of the school and the early childhood centre are nearing finalisation. Planning in Kinglake for future development

of recreation facilities is also underway involving VBRRRA, Sport and Recreation Victoria, Murrindindi Shire and community representatives. Plans for the rebuilding of the senior citizens centre have been finalised as a result of collaboration between VBRRRA, Murrindindi Shire, the Senior Citizens Club and the Community Centre Committee of Management.

- The Callignee Community Centre project is out to tender with tenders closing on 9 December and contractors expected to be on the ground in January next year.

As we move towards the holiday period, I am aware that this may be a more difficult time for many bushfire-affected people, particularly those who have lost loved ones.

I encourage you to read the Australian Psychological Society article within this newsletter as it's got some helpful tips.

If you or your family are experiencing difficulties you may also find counselling helpful at this time.

There are a range of counselling supports available including the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Programme, visit the Victorian Bushfire Appeal website at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal for details.

The Australian Psychology Association and Beyond Blue also have a variety of helpful advice for bushfire-affected people at www.psychology.org.au and www.beyondblue.org.au

I would also encourage you to take a break during the Christmas period so you can be refreshed for the next stage of rebuilding in 2010.

On behalf of the staff at VBRRRA I would like to wish you and your family a safe and restful Christmas and a great start to the new year.

Solar Hot Water Rebate

The Australian Government's Solar Hot Water Rebate has been opened up to people who lost their homes in the February 2009 Victorian bushfires and have rebuilt.

The rebate is not usually available for people building new homes, but the Australian Government is making an exception for homes destroyed or left uninhabitable following the February 2009 bushfires.

To be eligible to obtain a rebate, the rebuilt dwelling must meet the Victorian 5 Star standard by having a compliant 2000 litre rainwater tank installed which is connected to the dwelling for toilet flushing. Information on the Victorian 5 Star standard is available at www.makeyourhomegreen.vic.gov.au

To view the current eligibility criteria, application form and coversheet visit www.environment.gov.au/energyefficiency/solarhotwater/victorian-bushfires.html

Get Your Copy of Firestorm

Firestorm – Black Saturday's Tragedy is a pictorial record of the horrific fires that tore through Victorian bush and townships alike on Black Saturday.

The book was compiled by a committee of parents and friends of Glenvale School (Lilydale and Berwick campuses) and published by Glenvale School Lilydale Pty Ltd.

It captures the brutality of the fires, recognises the bravery of our firefighters and other emergency personnel and the courage, endurance and compassion of ordinary Australians who gave everything to help their fellow Australians survive, both during and after the onslaught.

Professionally designed and printed, the 240-page colour hardback covers all Black Saturday fires and contains informative statistics, gripping stories and first hand accounts of the devastating fires.

Priced at \$49.95, 100 per cent of the profits from the book will benefit individual CFA fire stations in the 'firestorm' area to assist them in the purchase of essential fire fighting equipment.

Firestorm – Black Saturday's Tragedy is available from all major book stores and can also be ordered at www.blacksaturdaysfirestorm.com.au



Isolated Victorians Helped to be Fire Ready

Isolated and vulnerable Victorians will receive extra help with emergency planning and heatwave preparation ahead of the fire season.

This help will be provided via \$1.25 million in grants to councils and community based agencies to support the elderly, the frail or people with disabilities to develop personal emergency plans.

A number of Community Registers including 23 new and seven existing registers will receive assistance via the funding.

Community Registers enable vulnerable Victorians, including older people or people with

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 Wednesday 9 December.

The Gallipoli Park Masterplan, which has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders including the Gallipoli Park Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, VBRRA, local community groups and the council, includes 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 also 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 golf course, Marysville Bakery or Buxton Store. The plan will also be on display at Murrindindi Shire Offices, Alexandra VIC 3714 or email your feedback to msc@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

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 msc@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

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

Work Starts on Marysville School and Children's Hub

Work recently commenced on the \$7 million stage one building of the Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub, which will include the town's new primary school and early learning centre.

The hub is a significant step forward for the fire-devastated town, and apart from the primary school will deliver a brand new community centre which will provide spaces for social and arts activities, meetings, functions and sport and recreation.

a disability who live alone, to receive important information about local conditions and safety issues through regular mail outs, newsletters or telephone calls.

The registers are run by community volunteers out of local police stations or other nearby locations including council offices, with local police support.

During a heatwave the registers can be used to check on the welfare of older citizens.

For information on your closest community register or how to set up a community register in your area, please contact the Office for Senior Victorians on 9208 3874 or email enquiries@seniors.vic.gov.au

Compassionate Financial Support and Scholarship 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 on the scheme visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal or call the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on 1800 180 213.

As well as the primary school and early learning centre, the centre will include construction of a maternal and child health consultation room. A shared foyer, administration, staff and resource areas will service both the new school and early learning centre, with all facilities under the one roof and linked to the community hub.

The benefits of co-locating the services close together will mean greater convenience for families accessing services and close integration between services, for example, having health services provided to children in the preschool and primary school.

It is anticipated that the primary school will be ready for students to move into in term two next year.

Coping During the Summer Holiday Season

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) has developed resources to help people 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.

Anniversaries and special occasions can be difficult when you are grieving the loss of loved ones or damage to your home and community following the bushfires. People may feel a heightened sense of loss during the summer holiday season, which is customarily a time of celebration with family and friends.

Anticipating the Holiday Season

It helps to anticipate what the holiday season might be like this year. How will you feel? How might family members feel? What do you think might trigger your grief or distress? It might be an activity that you used to do every year with your community, or with someone you have lost, like decorating the tree. Maybe you'll feel especially sad when you see other families celebrating together, or hear Christmas carols. Anticipating these triggers, and how you might feel, are important first steps in planning ahead for how you can cope at this time.

Tips for Coping

Sometimes people decide to have a break from the usual holiday rituals and do something completely different. Others prefer to maintain the rituals. It can help to spend the time with people who care for you, share your feelings with a close friend, allow yourself to cry if you need to, and say 'no' to things that you may not feel up to. You might find ways of commemorating loved ones by doing something in their memory – planting a tree, lighting a special candle....

It's ok, too, to allow yourself to enjoy the time. For children especially, the holiday season is still an exciting time, amidst their grief, and children can move quickly between different feelings. Letting them enjoy themselves, and allowing yourself to share their joy, can be difficult, but worthwhile.

The Australian Psychology Association has a variety of advice for bushfire-affected people, communities and psychology practitioners at www.psychology.org.au



**Victorian Bushfire
Reconstruction and
Recovery Authority**

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

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 10am to 3pm.

The Whittlesea Expo will focus on supporting the bushfire recovery priorities across the region.

It 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.

For further information about the expo visit www.centrelink.gov.au

Until Wednesday 23 December Meditation For The Soul

Yarra Glen Living and Learning Centre, 12-14 Anzac Avenue, Yarra Glen

Fortnightly meditation sessions are running each Wednesday until 23 December at the Yarra Glen Living and Learning Centre. Each session will commence with a discussion about different aspects of meditation followed by an exercise which will vary from week to week. The sessions will conclude with breath meditation. Sessions commence at 7.20pm (for a 7.30pm start) and conclude at 9pm. The sessions are free and supper is provided.

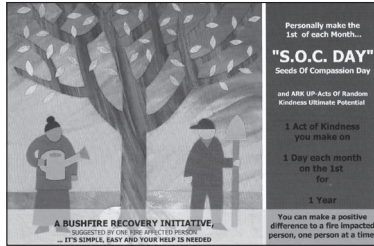
Sunday 14 February 2010

Ride For The Hills

Aughtie Drive, South Melbourne to Whittlesea Country Music Festival

You can help continue your support for all those who lost so much in the February bushfires by taking part in the Ride For The Hills motorcycle ride. Riders will assemble at 8am in South Melbourne for a 10am departure for Whittlesea. The cost to participate is \$25 per rider and \$15 for pillion passengers, and includes entry to the Whittlesea Country Music Festival. All proceeds will be donated to the CFA and SES

If you live interstate or can't make the ride, you can still help and be part of the Ride for the Hills charity collection by donating online. There are also prizes for online pre-registrations and online donations. For more information visit www.rideforthehills.org.au or email info@rideforthehills.org.au



Seeds of Compassion Day

Seeds of Compassion Day suggests that we all perform a simple act of kindness for a bushfire-affected person on the first day of each month, for the next 12 months.

This initiative was created by one fire-affected person who suffered multiple family deaths in the fires to help impacted people and our State to recover, and to honour the loved ones who never made it.

For more information on the initiative and how you can participate and spread the word, visit www.socday.vpweb.com.au/default.html

YMCA Holiday Programs

YMCA Victoria in partnership with the Bushfire Appeal Fund are offering a series of free school holiday programs for bushfire-affected communities over the summer holiday period.

Programs will run in the locations listed below and more information on the programs can be found at www.victoria.ymca.org.au/holidayprograms or by calling 9403 5090.

Bookings close on Friday 11 December, and those interested are strongly advised to book early as some locations are very popular.

Primary Age Programs: Alexandra, Churchill North, Healesville, Hurstbridge, Kinglake West, Redesdale, Traralgon South, Wandong, Yarra Glen and Yea.

Teenage Programs: Alexandra, Warragul, Whittlesea and Yea.

While the locations for the free programs and activities have been chosen to meet the needs of the bushfire-affected communities, YMCA Victoria recognises that many families have been displaced due to the fires, and are unable to access the free programs and activities.

Therefore families who have relocated to an area where a free program or service is not being offered can apply for a reimbursement of fees for primary and secondary students who attend programs offered by registered vacation care providers in the summer school holidays.

More information on reimbursement can be found at www.victoria.ymca.org.au/holidayprograms or by calling 9403 5090.

Communication Tips for Summer

With the bushfire season upon us it is critical that your communication devices are in good working order.

Telstra has prepared some important tips to help optimise your telephone service during a bushfire.

- **Think about a Blue Tick mobile phone** – different mobile phones have different capabilities. Telstra's Blue Tick accreditation program identifies mobile handsets that have enhanced coverage for country areas and for more information visit www.telstra.com.au/mobile/index.html
- **Upgrade your 2G SIM** – it's important that customers upgrade their 2G SIM card when purchasing a Next G™ mobile handset to receive the benefits of Telstra's extensive 3G network coverage. Customers can keep their number and it's a free service unless a new plan or handset is required.
- **Have a spare mobile battery** – it's advisable to have a spare, fully charged battery on stand-by.
- **Carry additional mobile phone chargers** – an in-car and a separate AC mains charger are essential in case of evacuation.
- **Consider a standard fixed phone** - power failures will affect cordless PSTN phones and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services that require 240V power to operate. Customers using VoIP should check with their service providers.
- **Keep essential numbers close by** – have a list of essential contact numbers close at hand, including local Police, Fire, Ambulance, SES and Telstra's fault line – 13 22 03.
- **Use triple zero (000) appropriately** – only call triple zero in life threatening emergencies. If your situation is not time critical but requires the attention of an emergency services organisation, you can obtain alternate numbers for these organisations by calling Telstra Call Connect – 12 456.
- **Keep calls to a minimum** – although Telstra monitors the network closely in times of emergency to avoid congestion, it's advisable to keep calls to a minimum during natural disasters to allow people to call emergency service organisations.
- **Gauge the benefits of a satellite phone** – if living or travelling in isolated areas, consider purchasing a satellite phone for continuous phone coverage.
- **Consider a Yagi antennae** – having one of these antennas maximises mobile phone reception from your home or vehicle.

For more advice on how to be fire ready this summer as well as details of CFA community meetings visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Sign Up for Recovery Update

If you would like to receive the *Recovery Update* newsletter by email, please email yoursay@dpc.vic.gov.au with your 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.