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Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority



thechair A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

FEBRUARY 7 ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL EVENTS

The anniversary of the Gippsland and Black Saturday fires will be a traumatic and emotional time for many people.

The majority of communities have told us they want private local events away from the public spotlight. The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority and local councils have been working with communities to support their locally planned events and secured funding through VBAF to pay for local events.

After consulting with the affected communities as well as those who lost loved ones on Black Saturday, the Authority and the Victorian Council of Churches have arranged a central service for midday at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne.

The service is being held to recognise the national significance of the day and to provide individuals not wanting to return to affected communities and those from other parts of Victoria who lost loved ones in the disaster with an opportunity to come together at a central commemorative event.

To show support for the survivors of the fires the Australian National Flag will be flown at half-mast and the nation will pause for a moment's silence.

Many of those who lost loved ones and who don't live in affected communities have advised that they would like to come together at the central service on February 7. They will have an opportunity to meet before the service and be provided with reserved seating.

Bereaved members of the community who would like to gather together before the service should contact Joyce Goh from VBRRA on 9651 7747.

My thoughts and the thoughts of all Victorians are with you as we approach this emotional anniversary.

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SERVICE AT ST PAUL'S – SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7

A central service will be held at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne on February 7 so bushfire-affected people living outside their communities, those who lost someone close to them and members of the general public wishing to pay their respects can come together. The service will be held at 11.45am for 12noon sharp on Sunday, February 7.

For those from the bereaved community who wish to meet with others before the service please contact Joyce Goh from VBRRA on 0438 836 321.

KINGLAKE FUEL UPDATE

Lease arrangements have been finalised for a site to house a temporary fuel outlet for Kinglake. The site is at 29 Whittlesea-Kinglake Road, opposite the National Park Hotel, and fuel should be available from here within weeks.

Murrindindi Shire Council and VBRRA are also continuing to work closely with the two former fuel operators to rebuild a permanent outlet by the middle of this year.

Provision of a short term fuel facility is a priority for both VBRRA and the Council. We understand how important this is for local residents and are working to balance this urgency with the critical regulatory and safety standards required.

REBUILDING ADVISORY CENTRES UNDERWAY

Progress is being made on the Rebuilding Advisory Centres (RACs) at Kinglake and Marysville. The structural steel frame has been erected at the Marysville site while that milestone will be reached in Kinglake in a couple of weeks.

Both centres are being made possible thanks to the generous donation of goods and time from architects, designers, builders and many building suppliers.

When finished the centres will act as a one-stop-shop for rebuilding advice and provide a range of information on finance, insurance, construction and new fire standards. They will have toilets, kitchen and meeting spaces and will be available for community events, eventually being handed over for community use.

The centres, being built to a minimum 'Bushfire Attack Level' of BAL29, should be open in the next few months.

MOBILE REBUILDING ADVISORY SERVICE

VBRRRA's Mobile Rebuilding Advisory Service continues to be popular, with almost 600 people having accessed the service since it began last year.

The free service provides face-to-face information, advice and assistance on all aspects of rebuilding and operates across all bushfire affected areas.

Bookings can be made through Community Service Hubs and a roster of new operating times is available on the VBRRRA website at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au If you're interested in having the service visit your town, please call 1800 240 667.

KINGLAKE EDUCATION AND RECREATION PRECINCT

Private land has now been secured for a new Education and Recreation Precinct in Middle Kinglake, thanks to the generous donation of a local landowner.

The Precinct will consist of a replacement primary school, a new early learning centre, including maternal health care, and a new multi-purpose community centre. Tenders will be let for the project shortly.

KINGLAKE STRATEGIC PLAN AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The Kinglake Strategic Plan and Design Framework is moving ahead.

Following the announcement of funding in the *Rebuilding Together* plan, VBRRRA held a community workshop in December to bring together stakeholders and identify the important areas to be considered in the planning process.

The Framework will guide the future development of communities in Kinglake Ranges. The community and other stakeholders will be able to participate in the planning process through community forums, design workshops, regular information updates and public presentations. Consultants will be appointed to begin work on it as soon as possible.

The process is being led by VBRRRA in partnership with the Kinglake Ranges Community Recovery Committee and Murrindindi Shire Council.

MARYSVILLE DESIGN FRAMEWORK APPROVED

The ongoing reconstruction of Marysville has taken another significant step forward, with the Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, fast-tracking approval of the new Urban Design Framework (UDF) for the township.

The UDF will guide the reconstruction of Marysville to not only reflect its pre-bushfire attributes but also to improve the town's urban design. It is the result of extensive consultation with the community, the council, local businesses and key stakeholders to ensure it reflects community needs.

SUSTAINABLE REBUILDING IDEAS

Comprehensive advice is now available to assist people rebuilding via information sheets that provide cost effective and simple ideas for making new homes more comfortable to live in, cheaper to run and with a lighter footprint on the environment.

The materials are available from Sustainability Victoria (1300 262 744), Community Service Hubs, VBRRRA rebuilding advisors or by visiting:
www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/sustainablebuildingideas

SUMMER STAFFING INITIATIVE

VBRRRA's Summer staffing initiative, offering bushfire-affected small businesses in Marysville and Triangle a support package to attract and employ staff, has proved so popular it has been extended by two weeks to February 12.

Under the Salvation Army-funded program, wage subsidies are paid to businesses that employ new staff, free accommodation is offered to workers to stay in Marysville, businesses have access to free employment advertising as well as support from the Small Business Mentoring Service.

Since its introduction 19 businesses have registered to be involved, more than 20 people have been employed, one workplace training program has been undertaken, over 18 nights accommodation have been booked in the area and training has been undertaken for new staff.

For more information about the jobs available visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au If you are a business and wish to sign up for the program please call Jane Arwas at VBRRRA on 8644 8975.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS BENEFIT FROM BUSHFIRE APPEAL MONEY

Communities affected by the February fires will share in a further \$6.4 million from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund for projects identified as a rebuilding priority by local communities.

Funding has been set aside for 37 community projects including local events, arts and cultural programs, youth leadership and upgrades to community and recreation centres in towns across the state under the second stage of a \$43 million Appeal Fund community projects program. The program formed a key part of a \$193 million *Rebuilding Together* plan.

The latest round of projects brings to 113 the total number of community projects to date which had received funding through Rebuilding Together. VBRRRA is continuing to work closely with the Fund to identify funding for other community-generated projects.

The following projects have been approved:

Project	Local Community Recovery Committee	Local Council	Funding Allocated
St Albans Hall Upgrade	Alpine Shire	Alpine	\$292,442
Rosewhite Photographic Exhibition	Alpine Shire	Alpine	\$10,000
Bendigo Community Memorial Celebration	Bendigo	Greater Bendigo	\$20,000
Mill Site Restoration, Recovery and Improvement	Boolarra and Yinnar	Latrobe	\$800

Boolarra and Yinnar Arts and Culture Programs	Boolarra and Yinnar	Latrobe	\$12,550
Flowerdale Arts Precinct – Community Garden	Flowerdale	Murrindindi	\$20,000
Flowerdale Community Events Program	Flowerdale	Murrindindi	\$39,500
Community Events for Fire-Affected Communities of Wellington Shire	Gormandale & District	Wellington	\$15,000
Youth Leadership Program	Gormandale & District	Wellington	\$30,000
Hazelwood South and Jeeralang North People and Wellbeing Events for the Community	Hazelwood /Jeeralang	Latrobe	\$35,000
Stanley Newsletter	Indigo	Indigo	\$8000
Bruarong Community Events	Indigo	Indigo	\$5000
Strengthening Jindivick Community Spirit	Jindivick	Baw Baw	\$30,000
Kinglake Monday Night Yrs 7-9 Youth Group	Kinglake Ranges	Murrindindi	\$16,000
Kinglake Ranges Community Events	Kinglake Ranges	Murrindindi	\$100,000
People and Wellbeing Community Events	Labertouche	Baw Baw	\$30,000
Drouin West Community Events Program	Longwarry	Baw Baw	\$20,000
Sustainability Expo	Marysville & Triangle	Murrindindi	\$10,000
Narbethong Community Events	Marysville & Triangle	Murrindindi	\$26,500
Marysville Community Events	Marysville & Triangle	Murrindindi	\$50,000
Buxton Reserve Upgrade	Marysville & Triangle	Murrindindi	\$97,000
Taggerty Hall and Park	Marysville & Triangle	Murrindindi	\$103,247
Marysville Multipurpose Community Facility and Recreation Centre	Marysville & Triangle	Murrindindi	\$4,250,000
Social Wellbeing of the Melba Communities	Melba Group	Murrindindi	\$31,840
Murrindindi – Woodburne Community Meeting Room	Melba Group	Murrindindi	\$414,566
Community Education, Fire Plan and Readiness for Mirboo North	Mirboo North	South Gippsland	\$25,000
Mirboo North Community Events	Mirboo North	South Gippsland	\$35,000
Wide Walking Track –	Mirboo North	South	\$40,250

Baths Road Reserve		Gippsland	
Redesdale Community Events	Redesdale	Mount Alexander	\$55,000
St Andrews Events and Social Issues	St Andrews	Nillumbik	\$46,950
Bushfire Garden/Landscaping, Restoration and Reconstructing	Toolangi/Castella	Murrindindi	\$77,000
Community Education, Fire Plan and Readiness	Traralgon South & District	Latrobe	\$40,000
Community Health and Wellbeing Activities	Traralgon South & District	Latrobe	\$54,800
Community Rebuilding and Support Events	Traralgon South & District	Latrobe	\$70,000
Whittlesea Community Hall Scoping Study	Whittlesea	Whittlesea	\$50,000
Whittlesea Community Connect	Whittlesea	Whittlesea	\$180,000
Community Events for Fire-Affected Communities of Wellington Shire	Yarram & District	Wellington	\$15,000

APPLICATIONS FOR MANY INDIVIDUAL GIFTS HAVE NOW CLOSED

Applications for most of the Appeal Funds 26 financial support packages for individuals closed on 31 December 2009. People who were unable to apply by that date, or who require additional time, will now have their applications considered on compassionate grounds on a case-by-case basis.

For further information, please contact the Appeal Fund information line on **1800 180 213**. Applications for the Compassionate Financial Support and Safe Removal of Hazardous Trees will remain open until February 28, 2010.

DONATIONS BALLOT REMINDER

A reminder that the final ballot for David Jones and Ikea vouchers will close on 12 February. The ballot process for distributing the vouchers was introduced due to the overwhelming demand for donated store vouchers.

Those who have not yet received either a David Jones or Ikea voucher and have points remaining should get in touch with their Case Manager or local Donations Coordinator to be entered into the ballot.

The system has been in place since July, to ensure around \$8 million worth of larger donations from businesses and corporations, such as shopping vouchers, electrical goods, free flights and holiday accommodation, are distributed as fairly and efficiently as possible to individuals and families.

Any bushfire affected person who was approved for or received a grant from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund is able to access donations under the points system.

WOMEN GATHERING AFTER FIRES GRANT COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Women from fire-affected areas are invited to attend a free workshop on Thursday 25 February from 10.30am to 3pm at the RACV Club Healesville.

The workshop will enable women to learn more about an exciting new grants program, 'Women Gathering After Fires'.

The program provides small grants to start new women's groups or to support existing groups. Funds can be used for food, transport, childcare, venue hire, and equipment or other establishment assistance.

For a detailed information brochure or to RSVP please call Leanne Manfre on 1300 368 333 or email communityrecovery@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

SUPPORT FOR BUSHFIRE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

In response to the ongoing traumatic impact of the Victorian bushfires in February 2009, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* has developed free training sessions for residents in fire-affected communities.

In the sessions, groups of up to 25 people work with a qualified mental health practitioner with experience in trauma to learn about the common reactions to a disaster and how to help someone who may be experiencing ongoing emotional difficulty.

Community members and groups interested in training sessions should visit the *beyondblue* website to see if there's one coming up in their area – www.beyondblue.org.au click on 'Victorian bushfires'.

Sessions can also be booked by calling *beyondblue*'s Project Manager Community Training, Ann Nicholls, on (03) 9810 6100 or email ann.nicholls@beyondblue.org.au

beyondblue information stands have also been placed in all Community Service Hubs in bushfire-affected areas. They hold *beyondblue* information on depression, anxiety disorders, and trauma – including the new booklet – *Looking After Yourself After a Disaster*. For more information visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call 1300 224 636.

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SUPPORT

We expect that the lead up to the 12 month anniversary will be a time when many individuals and communities affected by the bushfire experience heightened emotions. It is not unusual for people following a disaster to experience fluctuating emotions and distress particularly at times of symbolic meaning like an anniversary.

Experience from previous disasters indicates that most people take a considerable amount of time before they are ready to make important decisions like where they wish to live or whether they will rebuild. A broad range of existing programs, including the case management service, counselling services and grief and bereavement discussion groups, will continue to support individuals and communities impacted by the fires.

HOUSING

The Department of Human Services bushfire housing team continues to provide short to medium-term accommodation and housing support. Staff are developing individual plans together with households to help them transition to permanent accommodation during the rebuilding process.

COMMUNITY SERVICE HUBS TO CLOSE ON CODE RED DAYS

Community Service Hubs will be closed when a Code Red day is declared in their Fire Danger Rating district to ensure the safety of staff and the broader community.

FLOWERDALE, MARYSVILLE, KINGLAKE, AND WHITTLESEA HUBS TO OPEN ON SATURDAY 6 FEBRUARY

The Department of Human Services will be opening four of its Community Service Hubs on Saturday 6 February. The Hubs that will be open are: Flowerdale, Marysville, Kinglake and Whittlesea.

They will particularly welcome any fire affected people who are not currently living in those areas. Drop in for a cup of tea, a chat and pick up information about the progress of recovery.

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICE STILL OPEN

Individuals and families can continue to access case management support. The service will work long-term with those who require it. Even now, some people are asking for case management support for the first time and it is important they know that they haven't 'missed the boat'. We are also finding that some former clients are phoning us again as new issues arise.

People can contact the Case Management Service by calling **1800 050 400**. The Case Management Service will operate for two years, from February 2009 to February 2011



**Sunday 31 January, Sunday 14 February and Sunday 21 March
Free Reiki Treatments
Kinglake West Hall, 1055 Whittlesea-Kinglake Road, Kinglake West**

Reiki is a gentle Japanese form of stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. It is safe for everyone, including children. To book a free appointment email louise.riley1@gmail.com or call Louise Riley on 0418 391 809.

**5 to 7 February
Haven Centenary and Black Saturday Anniversary**

Come to the Haven community for three days of special events including the official opening of the Haven Primary School, art and photographic displays, wine/cheese tasting, Haven Market, free outdoor concert, vintage vehicle tour, cross country horse ride and plenty of food and drink for everyone.

For more information call Sue on 0409 257 256, Margery on 0429 846 273 and Elaine on 5382 2930 or visit www.havencommunity.org.au

**Sunday 14 February
Ride For The Hills
Aughtie Drive, South Melbourne to Whittlesea Country Music Festival**

Help continue your support for those who lost so much in the February bushfires by taking part in the Ride For The Hills motorcycle ride. Riders to assemble at 8am in South Melbourne for a 10am departure for Whittlesea. The cost is \$25 per rider and \$15

for pillion passengers, and includes entry to the Whittlesea Country Music Festival. All proceeds to the CFA and SES.

If you can't make the ride, you can still donate online. For more information visit www.rideforthehills.org.au or email info@rideforthehills.org.au

Saturday 20 February
2010 Ventou Marysville Lake Mountain Challenge

This bicycle ride passes through many of the towns affected by the Black Saturday bushfires including Buxton, Taggerty, Alexandra, Eildon, Thornton, Narbethong and Marysville. The event will feature a number of different courses that cater for cyclists of all abilities, and \$10 from each entry will be donated to the SES and CFA. For more information visit www.vic.cycling.org.au or call Mathew Hilton on 8480 3055.



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