

Monday 22 February, 2009

BUSHFIRE UPDATE

FROM CHRISTINE NIXON

CHAIR

BUSHFIRE RECONSTRUCTION AND RECOVERY AUTHORITY

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICE STILL OPEN

Individuals and families can continue to access case management support and the service will work long-term with those who require it.

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

VBARRA NEEDS-BASED DONATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TO CONCLUDE ON 26 FEBRUARY

The donations management system will be concluding on **February 26 2010**, as most donations will have been distributed to fire-affected individuals and families by this date.

Any bushfire-affected person who was approved for or received a grant from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has been able to access donations under the system, with each household given 1000 points to use on these high-value donations.

Most donations have now been distributed but there are still a number of Panasonic and Tupperware packs and Ikea shopping vouchers available.

Individuals and families that haven't used their points are encouraged to get in contact with their local Donations Coordinator or Case Manager before February 26 to access remaining donations.

Queries can be made by contacting local Donations Coordinators, Hub Captains and Case Managers, or by calling the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

COMMENT INVITED ON MARYSVILLE HUB

Concept plans for stage two of the \$7 million Marysville Community Learning, Health and Recreation Hub have been released and are available for public comment until March 5.

Plans include a multi-purpose community centre, indoor recreation centre and community health service.

A community briefing and feedback session will be held at the joint Marysville and Triangle Community Recovery Committee and Marysville and Triangle Development Group community meeting at the Marysville Golf Club on 28 February at 4pm.

To view the plans visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au To provide feedback on the plans email candice.eastwood@dpc.vic.gov.au or call Candice Eastwood on 9092 5875.

MURCHISON STREET AND TOWN AMENITY PROJECT

The *Rebuilding Together Plan* for bushfire reconstruction and recovery allocated funding to undertake planning and design for the restoration of Murchison Street, Marysville's main street, as well as other areas in the centre of the town.

The design stage will be undertaken collaboratively with the community to produce detailed landscaping and construction plans. **A workshop is being held to discuss the project at Marysville Golf Club on 24 February at 6pm.**

Come along and help design the landscaping and civic works to restore Marysville's streetscapes.

For more information about the project visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

HAZARDOUS TREES PAYMENT EXTENDED

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has extended the closing date for applications for the Safe Removal of Hazardous Trees payment to June 30, 2010.

The Fund recognises that many people are experiencing difficulty in obtaining an aborist's report and that additional time will allow people to gather the necessary documentation to apply for the payment.

The \$4000 payment has been made available to help residents meet the cost of assessing and removing hazardous trees on their private properties.

For more information about the payment including eligibility: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal or 1800 180 213.

INFORMATION SESSION FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN MURRINDINDI

All levels of government, the Industry Capability Network Victoria and the private sector are joining up to host an information session in Murrindindi Shire for tradespeople and those in the broader construction industry.

Attendees at this session will be provided with:

- details of building and construction projects underway and planned for the area
- practical information on how to compete for work arising from the projects in the area
- information on the support available to businesses, employers and their employees.

Further details about the sessions will be advertised later this month.

KINGLAKE RANGES, FLOWERDALE AND TOOLANGI DESIGN FRAMEWORK MOVES AHEAD

Tenders are being invited for a consultant team to develop a comprehensive plan and local area urban design frameworks to plan for, and guide, the long-term development and recovery of the communities of Kinglake Ranges, Flowerdale and Toolangi.

This \$500,000 planning initiative, funded by the Federal and Victorian Governments, will be undertaken by the Authority in partnership with Murrindindi Shire Council and the local Community Recovery Committees.

Tenders close on Thursday 11 March 2010.

MATERIAL AID STILL AVAILABLE

Material aid continues to be available to bushfire-affected residents, with approximately 9 per cent of the 21,000 pallets of donated goods still available.

The majority of remaining material aid includes second hand clothing, used books, toiletries, blankets and bed linen. There are also limited amounts of second hand couches. There is no remaining stock of nappies, baby wipes, pillows, new bed linen, crockery sets or toilet paper.

This material, which was donated by the public in the aftermath of the fires last February, has been managed and distributed by VBRRRA through the Clayton Warehouse, regional distribution points in Marysville and Pheasant Creek and by other agencies such as the Salvos and St Vinnies.

Blue referral card holders can access the remaining material aid from the following locations: the Kinglake Neighbourhood House, Clayton warehouse, Marysville, Pheasant Creek, Hurstbridge Relief Centre and Diamond Valley Baptist Church.

FREE REBUILDING ADVICE CONTINUES

The free Mobile Building Advisory Service is continuing to provide expert advice and information to help with all aspects of rebuilding homes and businesses damaged or destroyed in last year's fires.

Building advisers are available face-to-face or over the phone and operate from Community Service Hubs across all bushfire affected areas.

A roster of operating times is available on the VBRRRA website at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au. Appointments can be made by calling 1800 240 667.

OUR DOCUMENTARY - 'THE STORY SO FAR'

VBRRRA has released a four-part commemorative documentary to mark the 12 month anniversary of the devastating February bushfires.

Each section – The People, The Recovery, The Challenges and The Future – features locals from bushfire affected areas telling their stories in their own words.

It can be accessed via the We Will Rebuild website at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

12 MONTH REPORT

The VBRRRA 12 Month Report has been released, updating the progress made by communities over the past year and the many programs put in place to support them.

One of VBRRRA's biggest achievements has been in helping 33 local communities form Community Recovery Committees and articulate their plans for the future.

As a special tribute an article on each of these Committees is featured in the report, outlining the essential role they play.

The 12 Month Report is available on the We Will Rebuild website at: www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

ST PAUL'S SERVICE STILL AVAILABLE ONLINE

Just a reminder that the webcast of the Central Service to mark the Anniversary of the Victorian Bushfires held at St Paul's Cathedral on February 7 is still available online at the Premier's website.

A number of people in bushfire affected areas have said they have relatives and friends interstate and overseas who would like to view the service.

Simply click on to the link here: http://apac.vividas.com/6042_bfms/ and select your bandwidth on the right hand side of the page.

COMMUNITY SERVICE HUBS TO CLOSE ON CODE RED DAYS

Community Service Hubs managed by the Department of Human Services will be closed when a Code Red Fire Danger day has been announced in their relevant Fire Danger Rating District.

Consistent with Victorian government policy, the decision to implement hub closures on days declared to be Code Red is the safest option for staff and the local community. The Code Red warnings are likely to be made three days in advance.

Once the final decision to close a hub is confirmed the decision will not to change. This is regardless of any subsequent change in the weather forecast.

For more information about Community Service Hubs, including locations and contact information visit www.health.vic.gov.au/bushfire/individuals/respond_recover/hubs.htm

Alternatively, call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

TELSTRA INFORMATION DAY AT KINGLAKE

Telstra will hold an information day at Kinglake Community Services Hub on Thursday 25 February from 10am to 4pm. A Telstra representative will be available to discuss any home phone, mobile or internet related issues residents have experienced since the bushfires.

NEW PARENTING SUPPORT PROGRAM

Parenting Children and Teenagers Affected by Bushfire is a new practical parenting program for mothers, fathers and carers of children and teenagers affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

It is a free, six-session program that will be run in small supportive groups by local organisations in conjunction with the Parenting Research Centre. Childcare will be available and light refreshments provided.

The program will help parents and carers manage stress and anxiety, assist their children by gaining skills and confidence and support their family's recovery. Programs will be held in locations around Victoria during 2010, when and where families ask for them.

The first program is commencing 22 February in Kinglake.

To register for the Kinglake program or to find out more visit www.parentingafterbushfire.net.au or call 1800 780 720.

The program has been made possible by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on behalf of donors across Australia and the world.

SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Those who volunteered in the aftermath of the bushfires and feel their mental or emotional wellbeing may have been affected by their experiences, can now access free group debrief sessions.

The sessions are provided by Whittlesea Community Connections and Austin Health, and can help reduce isolation by providing an opportunity for people to share stories, experiences, issues and problems.

Austin Health Psychological Trauma Recovery Service can offer up to two free sessions for volunteers and can also offer group information sessions about the effects of trauma and treatment issues.

For session bookings contact Meg Sandercock or Emma Short at the Whittlesea Community Services Hub on 9719 1000 or email brvolunteers@whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au

WEBSITE FOR BUSHFIRE AFFECTED YOUNG PEOPLE

Headspace provides mental health support to young people and their families across Australia and recently designed *Your Bushfire Space*, a space for young people affected by the Black Saturday bushfires to share experiences, ask questions and find information about how to cope with their bushfire experience.

To access *Your Bushfire Space*, visit www.headspace.org.au/bushfirespace

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 contact Leanne Manfre on 1300 368 333 or email communityrecovery@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Media Inquiries: VBRR Media on 9092 5856 or 0428 634 194