

Wednesday 26 May, 2010

BUSHFIRE UPDATE

FROM CHRISTINE NIXON

CHAIR

BUSHFIRE RECONSTRUCTION AND RECOVERY AUTHORITY

STRATHEWEN PRIMARY SCHOOL SET TO OPEN IN TERM FOUR

Work is progressing on the rebuilding of the \$3.2 million Strathewen Primary School with construction well underway on the state-of-the-art building.

The school council and staff worked closely with the local community on plans for the school which will include two classrooms connected by a large project space, staff administration facilities and amenities, and a multi-purpose community hall.

The school has also benefited from generous donations, with Jim Kidd Sports providing \$200,000 towards activities to benefit pupils and \$20,000 coming from French students of Villers-Bretonneux, which will go towards building a giant outdoor chess set in the school grounds.

Strathewen Primary School is scheduled to be completed in September, with pupils set to return in term four.

UPDATE ON VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES BUSINESS INVESTMENT FUND

Business owners have until 30 June to apply for grants under the \$10 million Victorian Bushfires Business Investment Fund.

The Fund aims to attract larger-scale investment opportunities that restore and improve affected areas through the creation of new industries, sustainable jobs and ongoing economic growth.

Grants of between \$50,000 and \$4 million are available to meet the capital costs of setting up new businesses or expanding an existing business in a fire-affected region. Applicants are required to meet a minimum of 50 per cent of the overall project cost.

The Fund has attracted significant interest from businesses across the state and applicants are encouraged to prepare competitive bids to maximise their chance of succeeding.

It comes on top of other small business assistance including a \$51 million Commonwealth and State government assistance package, the \$10 million Tourism Industry Support Package, the \$600,000 Business Recovery Program and free business mentoring and advice.

Copies of the Victorian Bushfire Business Investment Fund guidelines and application form are available by calling the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or online at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

NARBETHONG PUBLIC RESERVE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

For many years Narbethong residents have wanted a public reserve – an open space for families, community celebrations and events.

Two community workshops are now planned to hear community ideas for this proposed reserve. Residents will be able to have their say on the location of public facilities including toilets, the car park, a children's playspace, a picnic area and bushfire memorial.

Workshop One – Information, ideas and aspirations

When: Thursday 10 June 2010 7.00 - 8.30pm

Where: Black Spur Inn, Maroondah Highway, Narbethong

Workshop Two – Discussion and feedback on the draft MasterPlan

When: Thursday 1 July 2010 7.00 - 8.30pm

Where: Black Spur Inn, Maroondah Highway, Narbethong

ALEXANDRA AND TRARALGON SOUTH COMMUNITY SERVICES HUBS

Alexandra Community Service Hub has now closed and the Traralgon South Community Service Hub be closing on Friday, 28 May 2010.

As local people have begun to feel confident to manage their own recovery, demand for services at both Hubs has reduced. After these dates, services previously provided at the Hubs can be accessed as follows:

Centrelink	132 850
58 Grant Street, Alexandra (by appoint. Weds)	
Cnr Chapel and Elgin streets, Morwell	
Bushfire Case Management Service	1800 050 400
Bushfire Housing Line	1800 006 468
Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund	1800 180 213
Building Advisory Service	0400 661 360
Murrindindi Shire Council	03 5772 0333
Mitchell Community Health	1300 773 352
Latrobe City Council	1300 367 700

Marysville, Buxton, Narbethong, Flowerdale, Kinglake, Hurstbridge and Whittlesea Community Service Hubs continue to operate. For Hub operating hours and contact details visit http://www.health.vic.gov.au/bushfire/individuals/respond_recover/hubs.htm

PLANNING PERMIT EXEMPTION EXTENDED FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION

A planning permit will not be needed for another 12 months for residents building temporary accommodation on their fire-affected properties.

The Planning Minister has extended the planning permit exemption for temporary accommodation for another year, recognising that fire-affected residents are continuing to rebuild at their own pace, and in many cases want to live in temporary accommodation on their property while they oversee the rebuilding of their permanent homes.

For more information contact your local council.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS IN THE CITY OF WHITTLESEA

An urgent call has gone out for volunteers to help replace boundary fences and clear trees and other debris from fire-affected properties in the City of Whittlesea.

So far more than 60 properties across Whittlesea, Humevale, and Kinglake West have had fences replaced as part of Whittlesea Council's Fence Aid, but there is still a long way to go.

Council recently secured new government and private funding so Fence Aid can continue until the end of June 2010.

It's hoped that all 63 properties who have registered for assistance in the City of Whittlesea area will have been helped by then – but volunteers are desperately needed to make this a reality.

It's not only fencing but also ongoing tasks such as replanting and helping to clear resident's blocks that require willing hands. To help, phone 9217 2532 or email bushfirerecovery@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

GIPPSLAND UPDATE

Callignee Community Centre: The \$3 million Callignee Community Centre will replace the Callignee Hall which was destroyed by the fires. It will be a multi-use facility constructed to specifically meet the needs of several community groups, the Callignee CFA and the wider Callignee community. The project is starting to take shape, with frames up on each of the structures and brickwork nearing completion on the CFA station and cricket pavilion.

Traralgon South Men's Community Shed: This community project will provide long-term opportunities for all to learn new skills and make new friends. Thanks to local support, the footings have been laid and the roof, frame and walls have been completed. Next steps are the electricals, plumbing and concrete slab. While it's known as the Men's Shed, the facility will be open to all members of the community. It will house Tool Library equipment, be available for community-based workshops and activities, and act a drop-in centre, among other uses.

Labertouche: Labertouche, along with the nearby Jindivick and Drouin West CRCs, felt it was important to thank all of the generous people who volunteered their time to help their communities rebuild. On 1 May, close to 400 people returned to Labertouche to share in a lunch and afternoon of activities as a thank you for their support.

Nangara Reserve: Adjacent to the Bunyip State Park, much of the reserve is remnant forest, which suffered fire damage on the western side on Black Saturday. Restoration works have started and will result in improved signage to and throughout the Reserve; upgraded walking tracks and erosion control; new information boards, interpretive signs, seating and art installations.

NEWS FROM TELSTRA

Following a community meeting in Flowerdale, Telstra has been working with more than 20 families to determine the best broadband, mobile and general telephone services for them. This has included some site visits to complete the assessment.

Your telephone service when rebuilding

Telstra says it's important to discuss lead-in and trenching needs in the early stages of rebuilding. Email the local Telstra team at MelbMetro@team.telstra.com and they will be in touch to discuss arrangements.

Hundreds of new broadband connections available

Telstra's says its \$15m bushfire infrastructure recovery project has resulted in hundreds more broadband services being made available to residents and businesses. New telephone exchanges at Marysville, Narbethong, Kinglake and Kinglake West as well as other new infrastructure have improved access to ADSL broadband.

Telstra reports it has also improved mobile coverage in Narbethong, Castella, Kinglake, Kinglake West, Dixons Creek, Arthurs Creek and Strathewen by investing in new Telstra Next G™ mobile network infrastructure.

Where to get help

Local residents can visit:

T[life] Store at Westfield Plenty Valley (McDonalds Road, South Morang);

T[life] Store at Westfield Doncaster (Doncaster Road, Doncaster);

T[life] Store at Chirside Park (Maroondah Highway, Chirside Park);

T[life] Store at Knox (Burwood Highway, Wantirna South);

Telstra Shop at Greensborough (Main Street, Greensborough).

When visiting the T[life] Stores, customers can try an array of fully functioning 'live' handsets as part of the Try Before You Buy initiative. Telstra can also be contacted on 13 22 00.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

A key part of VBAF's family support package the Health and Wellbeing for Older People program will provide funding for community organisations to run locally based health and wellbeing programs for older people in Victorian bushfire-affected areas.

Funds are available for three types of projects: physical activity, gardening events and social connectedness.

An information sheet and expression of interest form is available from:

<http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/people/health-and-wellbeing-for-older-people.html>

Applications close 7 June 2010. Further information from Office of Senior Victorians on 9208 3855 or email enquiries@seniors.vic.gov.au.

NEW KIDS GRIEVE TOO (KG2) PROGRAMS STARTING IN TERM 2

Kids Grieve Too (KG2) is a group support program designed to meet the special needs of children aged between 5 and 14 who have been bereaved through the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The KG2 program will commence throughout Term 2 in the Ringwood/Lilydale area; in the Hurstbridge/Eltham area, and in Gippsland and North Melbourne. KG2 is already running in Kinglake with places still available.

Term 2 enrolments are now open. For further information or to enrol in the KG2 program in your area, please call the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement on 9256 2111.

EIGHT NEW PARENTING SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR TERM 2

The Parenting Children and Teenagers Affected by Bushfire program is a free program for mothers, fathers and carers.

Eight new programs are planned to commence in Term 2 in Lilydale, Traralgon, Redesdale, Kangaroo Flat, Flowerdale, Eltham/Hurstbridge, Sandringham and Marysville.

Term 2 registrations are now open. To register or for more information regarding dates, times and exact locations, please visit: <http://parentingafterbushfire.net/>

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICE STILL OPEN

People directly affected by the February 2009 bushfires can access the case management service by calling 1800 050 400 until February 2011.

Individuals and families can continue to access case management support through the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service, which over the past 15 months has assisted more than 5500 bushfire-affected people.

People can call the case management telephone service, staffed by experienced case managers who can discuss the different services available to bushfire-affected people. Case Managers can also check back if further support is required, and people can choose to use the service again if their circumstances change in the future.

Well over two thirds of case management clients are back to managing independently and case managers are working with people to make sure that they can access the information and services they need to continue with their recovery.

MATERIAL AID UPDATE – MARYSVILLE AND KINGLAKE

A reminder that the Pheasant Creek and Marysville material aid centre will be closing when the lease ends on the facilities. Marysville will close on 18 June and Pheasant Creek on 25 June.

By then, most of the material aid generously donated to bushfire-affected families and individuals will have been distributed. After June, any remaining material aid will continue to be available from Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul stores and the Kinglake Neighbourhood House to holders of blue referral cards.

Community barbecues will be held on 12 June at the Marysville material aid centre and on 19 June at the Pheasant Creek centre to thank workers and volunteers and mark the end of material aid from these facilities.

A list of material aid centres is at: <http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/people/material-aid.html>

STEELY RESOLVE WILL ASSIST BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Almost \$1.6 million raised from recycling steel that was cleared from homes destroyed by the 2009 Victorian bushfires will be made available to Landcare and other community environmental groups to rehabilitate the environment.

Applications for funding for projects in fire-affected areas close on 4 June 2010. For more information call the Regional Landcare Coordinator in your local CMA, or Landcare and Community Engagement Policy Officer Allison Long at allison.long@dse.vic.gov.au

TUPPERWARE PACKS STILL AVAILABLE

Tupperware packs are still available to bushfire-affected households with a blue referral card. For more information go to <http://www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/financial-and-personal-support/tupperware-packs.html>

TOILETS AND SHOWER EXTENSION

Bushfire-affected people rebuilding on their property will now be able to have the use of free portable toilets and showers until 30 November 2010.

People can register for the free portable toilet and shower scheme via www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

Media enquiries: Liz McGrath or Melissa Arch at VBRR Media on 0428 634 194