

# Community Resilience Newsletter

## Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

29 MARCH 2016

*This is a weekly newsletter being issued by Colac Otway Shire to provide the community key updates about recovery following the fire.*

### Community Meetings

The April Community Meetings will be held next week on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>.

This Melbourne meeting will be held for the first time at Richmond Town Hall.

The City of Yarra has kindly provided a Melbourne home for the One Stop Shop and for Melbourne based residents to attend community meetings.

The April community meetings will focus on the work the Victorian Government has been doing to provide bushfire affected property owners with a comprehensive technical base.

The Geotechnical, Land Capability and BAL assessments and reports will be released on 31<sup>st</sup> March and the Waste Water Management report will be released on 5<sup>th</sup> April.

Presentations and discussions at the April Community Meetings will focus on the work, undertaken by Coffey Environments Australia, which builds on investigations and studies done in the past.

The aim of Coffey's work is to assist property owners, architects and the Shire to understand the design constraints and risks associated with the sites in Wye River and Separation Creek.

A number of key assessments to support the rebuilding of properties impacted by the bushfires have been undertaken and the outcomes of the study will include the following:

**geotechnical** investigations to understand technical issues unique to the area and to identify risks when rebuilding

**land capability** assessment to understand the geology, soil types, land and other features of the area

investigation of various **wastewater management systems** and identification of options to suit site conditions and environmental needs

The outcomes of the Coffey study will also inform individual property owners and their architects as to what additional property-specific investigations are needed to build a particular house design, potentially streamlining the investigations and assessments a property owner needs to commission, thus saving money and time.

The reports will be made available on the WyeSep Connect portal this week and fire affected residents will be sent individual correspondence via email on Thursday 31 March 2016, via Australia Post.

Fire affected property owners will also be advised of the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating for their property and there will be a presentation on the BAL assessments at the Community Meetings.

The updated Planning Regulations will also be explained and how they apply to Wye River and Separation Creek.

If you have a question or a topic you would like covered at the April or future Community meetings, please e-mail [bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au)

### What's On

#### Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April

5:30 – 7pm Richmond Town Hall

#### Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April

10:30am – 12 noon Wye River SLSC

12 noon Community BBQ

## From the Mayor

It was fantastic to be in Wye River on Saturday for the Easter Fete.

A whopping \$25,000 was raised on the day!

Congratulations to all of the organisers and a big thank you to everyone who attended and supported this fantastic annual event.

I joined fellow members of the Community Resilience Committee hosted a table at the Easter Fete and spoke with local residents and holiday makers about the resettlement and reconnection of the Wye River and Separation Creek communities.

The resettlement and reconnection is a process for the entire community, not just those who had property damaged or destroyed.

Everyone is welcome to attend the community meetings and other events.

At the April Community meeting in Wye River, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to a Community BBQ after the meeting.

The Community Meeting will be held from 10:30am – 12 midday and we will focus on the new planning regulations, BALs, waste water, geotech and land capability.

Then at midday we will have a sausage sizzle where we can all catch up more informally and continue the discussions from the meeting.

Dr Rob Gordon recently presented to the Community Resilience Committee about the importance of informal get togethers and making sure that everyone in the community has an opportunity to catch up and learn about what is going on and contribute their thoughts.

Along with a range of other community events that are being planned, we hope to hold a number of Community BBQs after the Sunday meeting.

After the BBQ the Community Resilience Committee will hold their meeting and this will provide a great opportunity for the members to discuss and act on issues raised earlier in the day as well all the items on the agenda.

I look forward to seeing you at the community meetings next week and if you have issues you would like us to address, please e-mail [bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au)

- **Frank Buchanan**

## From the Emergency Management Commissioner

The Easter weekend was a fantastic show of community spirit and connection, with everyone coming together to support each other and acknowledge the impacts of the past three months.

I had a wonderful time on Saturday attending the Wye River CFA Easter Fete and spending time with so many community members and visitors.

The Wye River Fire Brigade is a true community connector, and the support they received on Saturday is a testament to the invaluable role they played before, during and after the Christmas Day fires.

I enjoyed speaking with fellow members of the Community Resilience Committee and seeing the work they were doing to capture community feedback and ideas.

It was also great to see the work Grocon have been doing first hand, with 23 properties cleaned so far.

Resettlement takes time, and I would like to acknowledge the patience you have all shown through the process so far.

I know many of you have been eager to find out about planning and building and the technical studies the Victorian Government has commissioned.

This week, impacted community members will be receiving individual letters and information packs about the streamlined planning and building process and technical studies intended to help you understand the constraints and risks associated with building in Wye River or Separation Creek.

Hopefully these information packs will provide clarity and understanding, however I am sure that they will also raise many questions.

I encourage everyone to take some time over the next few weeks to digest the information and seek clarity and support where needed.

Please ensure you book into a One Stop Shop, which are up and running with a dedicated team of planning, health, engineering and building surveying professionals providing advice and assisting people through the building process.

- **Craig Lapsley**

## Clean-up Update

The clean-up crews are back in Wye River and Separation Creek after the Easter break.

Works have been progressing well over the past couple of weeks, despite some small delays due to weather conditions.

Grocon crews have been working in Iluka Avenue, Dunoon Road, Karingal Drive, Mitchell Grove and Bass Avenue and to date, 23 properties have now been cleaned and are awaiting certification from the hygienist.

According to current plans, the clean-up and discoveries of all damaged properties in Separation Creek will be complete by next week, weather and approvals permitting.

A very small number of property owners have opted out of the Grocon clean-up.

Colac Otway Shire has issued all of the required Emergency Orders on these properties which have opted out of the clean-up, yet still need to be cleaned up.

These property owners have been provided with the specific requirements of how they must go about cleaning up their properties, in compliance with current legislation.

## Septic Systems – what to do

As part of the current clean-up of private properties in Wye River and Separation Creek, Grocon will be removing septic tanks from damaged properties if the owners have requested that the septic tank be removed.

Please be advised that you will need to remove your old septic tank at your own cost if the septic tank is not removed by Grocon and you are required to install a new system.

If you have a current planning permit, you will be able to install the same system as indicated in your planning permit, however importantly, if a new planning permit is required to re-develop your property you will need to meet current standards for on-site wastewater treatment and therefore it is very likely that you will be required to remove your old septic tank.

In general, if your septic system or treatment plant was designed and installed prior to February 2013, it is unlikely that it will comply with the current regulations and you should strongly consider removing it during the clean-up.

All fire affected residents have been provided with a fact sheet that will assist them with making a decision about whether to have your septic tank removed by Grocon.

If you would require further assistance, you can make an appointment with an Environmental Health Officer at the One Stop Shops.

To make an appointment, please phone the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 5232 9400 and select 1.

## Volunteers supporting WyeSep projects

In the days and weeks after the bushfires, many people across the region, Victoria and even the nation, generously volunteered their time and skills to assist the Wye River and Separation Creek communities.

Colac Otway Shire is working closely with Volunteering Victoria to manage all of these offers to assist the community.

Volunteers have offered to assist with everything from gardening and working bees to providing professional services.

The Community Recovery Coordinator, Clare Malone, is overseeing the offers from Volunteers and linking volunteers with community projects.

If you have a project or idea that might benefit from some input from volunteers, or a specific need for assistance, please contact the Community Recovery Coordinator or send your idea to [bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au)



## The Christmas Day Fire

Local siblings Juna and Pema Hack are some of the youngest writers in Wye River.

The pair have publishing a book titled *The Christmas Day Fire*, which takes a look at the events surrounding the fire from their own perspective.

Their father Andrew Hack – a Wye River CFA firefighter – discussed the origins of the book and why writing and drawing about the fires helped his children during such a tough time.

“My daughter loves writing and she just received a new journal from her cousin for Christmas that day and had it with her.

It was something she was able to focus her mind on during the trauma of the day,” Andrew said.

“We encouraged my son to do something as well, and put something down on paper, because we thought that would be good for him to process what had occurred.”

The book tells the story of children’s experience on the day of the fire, as well as the days following while they stayed at the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club with their mother while Andrew was fighting the blaze.

The book has received some community attention after a small book launch last Sunday at the local CFA station.

Andrew hopes his children’s book will be “one part of what will be possibly a number of things that commemorate what was a dark day for the township”.

The Christmas Day Fire is available to purchase from the Wye River CFA.

Each book costs \$15, with all proceeds raised going towards supporting the Wye River CFA.

### Have your say

Do you have an event coming up or information you would like to share with the community?

Do you have questions you’d like answered?

Please e-mail Emma Diffen, Bushfire Recovery Communications Manager via [emma.diffen@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:emma.diffen@colacotway.vic.gov.au) so that your questions can be included in upcoming editions of the newsletter, at Community Meetings or via the information portal [www.wyeseconnect.info](http://www.wyeseconnect.info)

## Upcoming Events

### Sustainable Hook and Vine Festival

The Sustainable Hook and Vine Festival will be held in Torquay, on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> April. The organisers are kindly offering half price tickets to fire affected residents.

If you would like to organize a discounted ticket, please e-mail [bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au)



### Great Ocean & Otway Classic Ride

The RACV Great Ocean & Otway Classic Ride is one of Australia’s premier and most spectacular rides, attracting competitors from both Australia and from around the World.

Held on Saturday April 16<sup>th</sup>, the 145km ride features over 90km of road closures through the picturesque farmlands of the Otway ranges to Lorne and then back along the famous Great Ocean Road to Torquay.

### Great Ocean Road Marathon

Don’t forget, the GMHBA Great Ocean Road Marathon will be held on the weekend of 14-15 May.

The Great Ocean Road will be closed on the Sunday, from 7am – 2:30pm so please factor this in if you are coming to Wye or Sep for that weekend.