

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

7 MARCH 2016

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



Clean-Up Commences

This week marks a significant milestone with the Clean-up commencing in both Wye River and Separation Creek.

Following five weeks of intensive planning, meeting with residents and scoping properties, creating access and developing traffic management plans, the machinery and equipment was put into place over the weekend and work has commenced today.

Three crews are on site this week – one in Separation Creek, one in Illuka Avenue and one in Illowra Avenue.

A range of safety measures are being put in place, including concrete barriers along the Great Ocean Road to prevent any materials falling or sliding down the hill and onto the road.

A traffic management plan has also been implemented, taking into account the road works underway in Separation Creek.

Bushfire waste will be disposed of in both Fyansford in Geelong and in Camperdown, so trucks will be moving to the north east and north west towards these locations.

Grocon is setting up temporary site sheds in the car park opposite the CFA. The clean-up will be managed from these sheds and contact details for Grocon staff will be available at the sheds.

Residents who have opted in to the clean-up will be contacted by Grocon a couple of days prior their property being cleaned up.

Residents will have the opportunity to discuss any questions, indicate if they would like to be on site during the clean-up and specify if there are any particular items they would like to be put aside on the site.

Residents wanting to be on site are welcome to be there at their own risk and protective equipment and clothing will be available for residents to use. This can be collected from the CFA.

If you have not yet registered or opted in for the clean-up, you can still do so.

Please contact the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 5232 9400 with any questions.

Stay Connected through WyeSep Connect

All the latest information about the resettlement of the Wye River and Separation Creek communities is available at www.WyeSepConnect.info

An initiative of Emergency Management Victoria and Colac Otway Shire Council, this online portal will source and share information, news, events, achievements and challenges from anybody with an interest or involvement in the resettlement of the area.

WyeSep Connect is sorted around the eight resettlement priority areas of Connection, Wellbeing, Clean-up, Tourism, Infrastructure, Planning and Building, Flora and Fauna, and Business.

It will enable a more connected community, allowing for increased interaction and input as the resettlement progresses.

Your support of WyeSep Connect is invaluable and we openly welcome comments, contributions and feedback in order to build the most capable and useful platform to create a connected community.

Please take a moment to visit WyeSep Connect and subscribe for the latest news and updates at www.wyeseconnect.info, and also join our Facebook community at www.facebook.com/WyeSepConnect.

From the Mayor

It was great to see many of you at the Community Meeting in Wye River yesterday.

It was good to hear updates from a range of our partners from the \$50 million upgrade of the Great Ocean Road to important environmental projects.

The information presented yesterday by David Younger around the kinds of experiences we are all having was very informative and I agree with him - it is very important to keep things in perspective and not lose sight of the bigger picture.

The resettlement of Wye River and Separation Creek is a huge task and one that will include many phases and milestones.

David spoke about commonalities we are experiencing, like that fact that we are all in this together!

The things happening in our lives right now are very different to what we thought they would be before the fires.

This disruption can bring about high levels of stress and anxiety, which in turn, can impact on our ability to make good, well considered decisions.

Stress can make it hard to work through the decision making process, cause problems sleeping and eating among many others.

For residents living locally in Wye River, Apollo Bay and surrounds, please visit the One Stop Shops where you can meet with DHHS staff and Red Cross volunteers who are available to talk to about services that might help you, how to connect in with health services and how to recognize and manage stress and anxiety.

David also spoke about Community and the importance of supporting each other. He and Dr Rob Gordon will be running some sessions in Wye River and Melbourne to help the community heal, as individuals and as a collective.

Information about these sessions will be provided in a range of ways including the WyeSepConnect information portal and via e-mails from the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre and in this newsletter.

For the very small number of you who don't access e-mail or the internet, we will continue to write to you and ring you.

Please continue to take care of yourselves.

- **Frank Buchanan**

From the Emergency Management Commissioner

A significant step has been taken with the Wye River and Separation Creek clean-up commencing today.

As outlined at the recent community meetings Grocon have started the onsite clean-up and you will see trucks and heavy earthmoving equipment on the ground and action happening.

This is a tangible first step in a long journey towards resettlement.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work that has gone on behind the scenes to get to this point, and the patience and understanding shown by the community of the complex and difficult job facing the departments, agencies, contractors and council.

I have spoken to many community members about the use of the words resettle, reconnect and resilience, rather than rebuild and recovery.

Every community member and family unit is unique and in the words of Dr Rob Gordon now is the time to acknowledge the stress and impact this event has had and to take the time to plan your own journey to resettlement.

Whether that is resettlement in Wye River or Separation Creek, or resettlement into new goals and a new phase of your life.

Rob and his colleague David Younger have been at the past two community meetings and have valuable insights around looking after yourselves and what to expect.

Rob has also been a great support to me with his experience supporting communities through the Black Saturday bushfires.

You will hopefully know about the new WyeSep Connect website and facebook page. We're continuing to work on the content and make information available to you. If you missed the community meetings you can access the key information on WyeSep Connect.

This week we are experiencing significant heat. The Wye River fire is currently controlled, but we are still monitoring it closely. I urge you all to take care, stay safe, look after yourself and others and make sure you keep an eye on the www.emergency.vic.gov.au website.

Craig Lapsley

Great Ocean Road upgrade

The five year, \$50 million program to upgrade the Great Ocean Road continues with works in Separation Creek underway.

The bridges at both Separation Creek and Wye River are being completely rebuilt and the new Separation Creek bridge will include pedestrian access.

VicRoads is working with Grocon to ease traffic congestions during this work, which is expected to be completed in by October.

It is expected that up to 50 trucks will be moving in and around Wye River and Separation Creek during the clean-up.

Collecting ideas for flora and fauna

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is looking for ideas into its program of resettlement projects, which include rebuilding and updating Paddy's Path, the local playground, the Foreshore Campground Office and Kitchen and Wye River Walk.

DEWLP is also looking at other projects including the extraction pump and water infrastructure, and weed management in conjunction with Colac Otway Shire and Parks Vic.

The initial feedback from the community has been positive and many people have been keen to share their thoughts, ideas and input on these projects.

The 'Open House' engagement approach has been aligned with recent community meetings, and will continue as part of the shire-led one-stop-shops over the coming weeks.

We are looking at online opportunities to engage for those who cannot make it in person. Working with EMV, we will ensure people can access this through the Wye Sep Connect website www.wyeseconnect.info and should have this up and running this week.



Weeds Consultative Committee

On 25th February, the Weeds Consultative Committee met to discuss weed management issues in Wye River and Separation Creek following on from the Christmas Day fires.

This existing group, which includes representatives from local and state government departments and Landcare groups, was joined by community members and representatives from other agencies with an interest in the area.

The group discussed priority weed species to be targeted, which included Sweet Pittosporum, Banana Passionfruit, and Asparagus Fern.

The next steps for the group are to develop a project plan for weed control, and consider what actions can be taken in the short-term, bearing in mind there will be access issues due to the important and extensive clean up works which are still taking place.

Hazardous Trees

Arborists from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have identified a number of hazardous trees, on both private and public land, in Wye River and Separation Creek.

Permission was granted by landowners for these trees to be felled by the arborists and removed as part of the clean-up.

Residents who want to save felled trees for community art projects like the Symbol of Destruction and Survival need to advise Grocon prior to their property being cleaned up.

Art Project - A Symbol of Destruction and Survival

Moving forward, an idea has emerged from local residents to commission a piece of art/sculpture incorporating items salvaged from houses destroyed in the bushfire.

Residents are invited to express interest to be part of the group that will be responsible for overseeing of the project, as well as contributing items from their property.

A shipping container next to the CFA will house the items and residents who would like to contribute items from their property can take them here.

Each item will be recorded including where it came from and its significance.

Christine Shaw has volunteered to coordinate this project initially and can be contact on 0431 877 370 or via e-mail christineshaw68@hotmail.com

Government support for Colac Otway Shire

Treasurer Tim Pallas announced a \$400,000 funding boost to support Colac Otway Shire after the devastating impacts of the Christmas Day bushfires in the Otway Ranges.

The Victorian Government recognises that the recovery effort has come at a cost to Colac Otway Shire with many resources and services being diverted to assist the bushfire recovery effort.

The Victorian Government is providing this funding so Colac Otway Shire can continue delivering services to communities while also undertaking important bushfire rebuilding efforts.

Mayor Frank Buchanan said the \$400,000 in funding acknowledged the impact the bushfire had on the entire community.

“There has been a significant cost to our community in responding to this emergency, and a significant part of this has involved re-assigning staff from their usual duties to dedicate their time to bushfire response, the rate waiver we extended to the bushfire affected ratepayers, community meetings in Melbourne and Wye River, the list goes on.

“While work continues along our coast on the bushfire recovery effort, this funding specifically acknowledges the far-reaching impact the bushfires have had on our entire municipality.”

Personal Support

Department of Health and Human Services staff and Red Cross Volunteers are on site at the Apollo Bay and Wye River One Stop Shops.

The Apollo Bay One Stop Shop is open from 10am – 4pm, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Wye River operates from 10am – 4pm on Friday and 10am – 1pm Saturdays.

Residents wanting more information about accessing support services can speak with these staff at the One Stop Shops, or call the Bushfire Recovery Information Line on 5232 9400 and request information

A number of group sessions will be held in coming months with Dr Rob Gordon and David Younger.

Details of these sessions will be included on the WyeSepConnect information portal, in the newsletter and provided by e-mail.

Help is available - For information on services available locally and referral for support please call Department of Health and Human Services on 0417 311 293 for tailored individual advice.

Upcoming events:

Are you smarter than a lifesaver? Wye River SLSC Trivia Night

This fundraising trivia Night will be held this weekend, on the 12th of March, 7pm for a 7:30 start.

Grab your team of 10 and book your table, put your thinking caps on and support the SLSC! Tickets are \$10 per person and you can BYO nibbles and drinks.

For more information, contact:

Rebecca 0420 447 181

Jaime 0409 518 715

CFA Easter Fete

Wye River CFA will be holding their annual fundraising Easter Fete on Saturday 26th March, from 10am – 1pm.

There will be a range of items for sale including handmade crafts, delicious home grown and home made bottled goods, baked items and produce, new and pre-loved designer clothes and accessories,

tagged and tested electrical items, toys, toiletries, books and Bric-a-Brac.

There will also be a raffle and a range of auction items to bid on.

Funds raised will be directed towards training and communications facilities within the Fire Station.

For more information or to donate items, please contact Christine Shaw christineshaw68@hotmail.com or phone 0431 877 370

Lorne Sculpture Biennale

The annual Lorne Sculpture Biennale is set to be even more impressive than the last, commencing March 12 – April 3.

Community members and visitors alike are invited to pick their favourite pieces of art as they stroll along the Lorne foreshore sculpture trail.

The event will see a unique variety of sculptures from leading Australian artists, with small and large sculptures on display, live sculpturescape, and performance art where an artist uses their body to create a real-time experience.

This year will see artworks on display at the Wye River General Store as part of the event.

Wye River SLSC Wye Revival Family Day

The Wye Revival Family Day will be held on 27th March, from 4.30pm onwards. Come along and enjoy live entertainment, face painting for the kids, a delicious BBQ and hot jam donuts!

More information and staying informed

Please call the Colac Otway Shire Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 5232 9400 (and press 1) between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

One Stop Shops

To make appointments to see specialist staff at the four One Stop Shops in Wye River, Apollo Bay, Colac and Melbourne, please phone the Bushfire Information Recovery Centre.

Appointments are required to ensure the right staff are available to answer your specific questions about rebuilding and support services.

Monday – Wednesday, 10am – 4pm at Apollo Bay
69 Nelson Street, Apollo Bay

Thursday, 2-7pm at Richmond Town Hall
333 Bridge Road, Richmond

Friday, 10am – 4pm and Saturday 10am – 1pm
Wye River Surf Life Saving Club