

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

18 APRIL 2016

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

Community Meeting Follow up

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville spoke with fire affected residents and members of the community at the Community Meeting in Wye River on 10th April.

Minister Neville committed to investigating questions and concerns raised by the community around protecting the towns from future fires, building within the BAL requirements, and further understanding geotech hazards and wastewater solutions.

In response to these concerns, Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley has put together a panel of technical fire and building experts who, with Government and agencies, will work with the fire impacted communities to progress resettlement.

The panel will review the bushfire risk management at Wye River and Separation Creek based on the existing regulatory and policy framework.

The expert panel has already been convened and a member was invited to and spoke at the community only meeting on Saturday 16 April 2016, organised by the community representatives of the Community Resilience Committee.

The panel will provide advice to the Commissioner, Government and the community on evidence-based, practical options for building design and construction standards across individual assets and streetscapes, particularly for the properties in Wye River and Separation Creek that are rated at the highest and second highest bushfire attack levels (BALs).

In addition to the expert panel, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville, will put in place the following from 18 April.

What's On

Thursday 5th May

Community Meeting

5:30 – 7pm Richmond Town Hall

Saturday 7th May

Community meeting

10:30am – 12 noon Wye River SLSC

12 noon Community Catch-up

Consideration of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) at Wye River and Separation Creek by Justin Leonard (CSIRO) and Ass Prof Kevin Tolhurst (The University of Melbourne).

This will:

- Evaluate the level and extent of fuel management required to look at different options from settlement-wide to individual sections.
- Assess the feasibility and cost of construction for these different options, and any implications of the options on landslips and amenity.

Given the Australian Standard for constructing buildings in a bushfire prone area applies, the expert panel will consider the outcomes of fire and terrain modelling and provide advice on any innovative ways to reduce the impact of a potential bushfire, if an asset protection zone is not deemed viable.

Individual advice to individual residents on options and approaches to rebuilding in Wye River and Separation Creek – free of charge

- Permit applicants can receive tailored information through the one-stop-shop, from experts from the Victorian Building Authority about rebuilding that is specific to their own individual designs.

This will include advice on building products, materials, and construction based on the design to meet BAL ratings.

Personal advice to individual residents on waste water management solutions – free of charge

- Permit applicants and their builders can book an appointment at the One Stop Shop with Coffey Environments Australia to receive advice on waste water management solutions to meet proposed building designs.

Personal advice to individual residents to maximise benefits from geotechnical and land capability assessments – free of charge

- Permit applicants can receive tailored advice before they engage engineers to determine building specific requirements on the work that needs to be undertaken. This will ensure they maximise benefits from the settlement wide investigation completed to date.

Community members can call the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 03 5232 9400 (select 1) to book an appointment.

These actions are all part of a continued focus to ensure the building process for individual residents is as straight forward as possible.

Residents Meeting

In response to the questions and concerns raised at the April Community Meetings, a Residents Only meeting was held in Wye River on Saturday 16th April.

Led by the Community members of the Community Resilience Committee and attended by more than 75 community members, the focus of the meeting was to hear from bushfire experts and then discuss and vote on priorities for the WyeSep community.

The Co-Chair, Dr Diane Sisely, wrote the following letter to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville, expressing community views.

The letter reads:

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the community of Wye River and Separation Creek we, the community representatives on the Resilience Committee, write to inform you of the outcomes of our

community meeting held at the Wye River Surf Lifesaving Club on Saturday, 16th April.

The purpose of the meeting was to enable the community to discuss and prioritise the broader range of options available to better protect our townships from future fire. We heard from bushfire experts Justin Leonard (CSIRO) and Mark Adams (University of Sydney) as well as residents.

More than 75 full-time and part-time residents attended the meeting and 64 participated in a secret ballot at the conclusion of the meeting, ranking specific priorities to better protect Wye River and Separation Creek from future fire.

The meeting was attended by residents who have sustained property damage or loss and those who haven't. Approximately 69% of the residents attending the meeting have sustained property loss or damage in the fires, and it was pleasing to note that a majority of those intend to re-build. The remaining 31% of the residents attending have not sustained property damage or loss.

Attendees provided a valuable cross section of the total community. About 20% of those attending don't yet know if they will rebuild and four residents indicated that they cannot rebuild.

There was strong support amongst the residents attending the meeting for a community-wide approach to the better protection of Wye River and Separation Creek from future fire and for a shared responsibility approach between property owners, local and state governments.

At the end of the meeting residents were asked to rank their preferred actions to prevent future fire:

- *The highest ranked priority action was for the implementation of an Asset Protection Zone around Wye River and Separation Creek.*
- *In this context the second most frequently chosen priority action was to build the resilience of the environment by keeping native vegetation at sustainable ecological levels.*
- *The third ranked priority action was for the recognition of the shared responsibility – of property owners, Colac Otway Shire and the Victorian State Government – to appropriately manage public and private property to better protect against future fire.*

- *The fourth most frequently chosen priority action was for the implementation of measures to reduce Bushfire Attack Levels and to do so by adopting an equitable and community-wide approach.*

We would be very pleased to meet with you in the coming week to discuss the priority actions identified by our community to better protect our community from future fire.

Yours sincerely,

Diane Sisely

Co-Chair Wye River and Separation Creek Community Resilience Committee

From the Mayor

The last few weeks have seen a great deal of information distributed to residents and discussed throughout the community.

The technical assessments and reports into the Bushfire Attack Levels, geotech hazards and waste water solutions cover very complex information which takes time to process and understand.

I welcome the commitments made by the Minister and the Victorian Government to further assist residents work their way through this information and figure out exactly how it applies to their property.

There is already some great work being done in the One Stop Shops and by the staff in the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre and I encourage you all to continue to use these services.

If you can't make it to one of the four One Stop Shop locations, then please request a teleconference appointment which will enable you to ask you questions of the experts via the phone.

I also welcome your input into the Community Resilience Committee.

I Co-Chair this Committee with Diane Sisely and welcome questions, comments and requests.

The CRC is having an intensive planning day this Friday where we will hear from experts about flora, fauna, wellbeing, economic development, infrastructure, planning and building.

The Committee will also have the results of the survey from the Interim Recovery Committee and the outcomes from the Residents Meeting last Saturday to help plan how we can best help the Resttlement of Wye River and Separation Creek.

You are welcome to have your say by e-mailing bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au or the Community Reps crcwyesepcommunityreps@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing your views.

- **Frank Buchanan**

From the Emergency Management Commissioner

It has been another big week for the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek and I know for some it can feel like a rollercoaster.

As the reality of whether or not community members can rebuild takes shape, it will continue to present challenges and for each individual that will look and feel different.

The most impressive thing I've seen in this past week is community pulling together to decide what is most important to them, whether everyone agrees or not.

Mature debate and discussion is healthy and necessary as decisions get made about resettlement and rebuilding and bushfire risk management.

Our goal is to support a community to resettle in the safest way possible, which is why we have appointed an expert panel to review bushfire risk management in Wye River and Separation Creek.

The panel will work with government, shire, agencies and the Wye River and Separation Creek Communities to review the bushfire risk management, based on the existing regulatory and policy framework.

They will provide advice around the best practical options for building design and construction, and will consider an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) along with different ways to reduce the impact of fire in the area, for individual properties, streetscape or settlement wide.

Community members would have heard from panel member and CSIRO bushfire expert Justin Leonard at the community only meeting on Saturday.

The other members of the panel include: John Mealia, Fire and Emergency Management Specialist ; John Shaw, Director at Victorian Building Authority; and Stephen Kip, Fire Safety Engineer.

The panel will provide advice to me and to Government in the next few weeks about the scope of work they will undertake.

Other work that is occurring is the evolution of the WyeSepConnect website, to include more community focussed areas.

This includes a page dedicated to the Community Resilience Committee, hosting minutes and key information, along with an open forum for community discussions that will be up and running shortly.

It was also fantastic to see the community acknowledge the great work Grocon have been doing in the clean-up, with the crews finishing up in Separation Creek this week and a total of 66 properties cleaned and awaiting certification.

- **Craig Lapsley**

New Community Water tank for Harrington Park and Wye River Community Garden

The Lions Club of Lorne has generously donated a water tank to the Wye River community to provide drinking water to residents still without a safe supply, to support initial rebuild efforts and to provide an additional source of potable water for use in the community garden.

The 19000L water tank will be temporarily located to the east of the BBQ area in Harrington Park while the community is consulted to determine a permanent location.

One Stop Shop Teleconferences – bringing the One Stop Shop to residents

Residents are invited to schedule teleconference appointments with specialist staff at the one Stop Shop.

The teleconference service is being offered to provide greater access to One Stop Shop specialist staff and provides a convenient alternative for residents who may find it difficult to visit a One Stop Shop in person.

Initial planning application discussions can easily occur over the phone and will provide residents with the information they need to get started on their planning application.

As their plans progress, they will then be able to make an appointment to meet with the One Stop Shop staff in person.

The teleconference service will also assist in answering general questions and provide clarity for residents.

Residents must make an appointment to ensure the relevant services are available.

To contact the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre to book a face to face or teleconference appointment, phone 5232 9400 and selecting 1 or e-mail bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au

Personal Support

There are a range of support services available to Wye River and Separation Creek residents.

For information on services available locally, please call Department of Health and Human Services on 0417 311 293 for tailored individual advice.

There are also a range of videos by Dr Rob Gordon on www.wyeseconnect.info

These videos provide some great tips on understanding and managing stress.

Upcoming Events

Community Meetings

The Community Meetings for May will be held:

Thursday 5th May 5:30 – 7pm

Richmond Town Hall

and

Saturday 7th May 10:30 – 12 midday with a community catch up to follow.

Wye River SLSC

Great Ocean Road Marathon

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

Do you have a question or suggestion?

Is there a topic that you would like more information on? Please let us know.

Regular updates are provided to the community via the newsletter, WyeSep Connect, e-mails and via the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre.

Please get in touch and let us know what you'd like to know! Please e-mail bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au