

# Community Resilience Newsletter

## Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

9 MAY 2016

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

### Community Resilience Committee Update

The Community Resilience Committee met on Saturday afternoon following the Community Information Meeting.

The CRC discussed a range of issues, most significantly, the development of four Working Groups, or sub committees.

The Working Groups will enable the greater community participation in the ongoing resettlement and reconnection of Wye River and Separation Creek.

The Working Groups will inform the work and discussions of the CRC, which, in turn, feeds back to the State and local Government.

The Committee agreed that the four Working Groups will assist the CRC to better understand the feeling of the community and how it sees Wye River and Separation Creek in the future.

The Working Groups will focus on four main areas and will be chaired by CRC members:

- Paul Green - Business and Tourism
- Joanne Tyler - Flora, Fauna and Beachscape
- Deb Hocking - Wellbeing and Connection
- Ian Angus - Planning, Building and Fire

The CRC is now seeking Expressions of Interest from community members to participate in the Working Groups, either as a member of a group or by contributing ideas or suggestions.

Nominations to the Working Groups are open for everyone to contribute including full and part time residents, regular campers, holiday makers and visitors to Wye and Sep.

This is a way to contribute and is open to everyone, not just those whose properties were damaged or destroyed by the fires.

Online discussion forums and face to face sessions will be facilitated.

Expressions of Interest are now being sought and detailed information on how to apply will be provided via e-mails from the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre, [www.wyeseconnect.info](http://www.wyeseconnect.info)

### What's On

#### Expert Panel – Community Discussion

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 5:30

State Control Centre, East Melbourne

#### Waste Water Workshop

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1-4pm

Wye River SLSC

#### Playground Design Workshop

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 10am-12 noon

Wye River SLSC

#### Community Information Meetings

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June, 10:30 – 12 noon

Wye River SLSC

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 5:30 – 7pm

Richmond Town Hall

### More support for WyeSep community

At Saturday's Community Information Meeting, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville advised the community of new financial support for Wye and Sep.

An additional \$190,000 has been allocated for priority projects that further assist the area's resettlement.

These projects will receive additional funding:

- \$100,000 for the Wye River CFA, which will go towards funding an extension to the local CFA building and an equipment upgrade

- \$60,000 for the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club, which will fund repairs and an upgrade to facilities and equipment
- \$30,000 to support immediate weed management works

Minister Neville said the Victorian Government is putting communities first.

“We want these grants to go a long way in strengthening the sense of community and resilience in Wye River and Separation Creek,” Minister Neville said.

“Community input will be central to the planning and delivery of these projects, ensuring local facilities are in line with community expectations and longer-term needs.”

“The Wye River-Jamieson Track fire had a huge impact on the local economy, these projects will provide a continued economic stimulus to the region,” she said.

### **First Planning Permit Application submitted via One Stop Shop**

The first planning permit application has been received and is being expedited through the One Stop Shop.

Many residents are continuing to make appointments both in person and via the teleconference services at the One Stop Shops.

Starting this week, specialist waste water consultants from Coffey will be available at One Stop Shops to discuss individual waste water solutions and a workshop will be held on Saturday afternoon, 28<sup>th</sup> May, in Wye River, focusing on cluster based waste water options.

### **From the Mayor**

I was unable to make it to the Community Information Meetings last week due to illness, however I was able to keep up to date through [www.wyesepconnect.info](http://www.wyesepconnect.info)

It was terrific to be able to look at the video of Thursday’s Community Information Meeting held in Richmond as well as watching the video from Dr Kevin Tolhurst from the University of Melbourne discussing the investigation into fuel management strategies such as Asset Protection Zones.

I know it is difficult to sometimes feel part of things if you aren’t there in person. However, I want to encourage everyone to utilise the technology we have available and join the online WyeSep community.

It’s great to see we can use of all the technology available in the city to give everybody, everywhere access to the information.

There is a wealth of information available on WyeSep Connect and the new Forum provide the ability to discuss ideas, questions and suggestions.

The CRC will be making use of the Forum in coming weeks, so get involved!

A lot of the immediate relief and recovery work is well under way and now it is time to think about the longer term projects and vision for Wye River and Separation Creek.

The Community Resilience Committee has developed four Working Groups to assist the CRC to better connect with the wider community.

This input will help shape the resettlement of Wye Sep.

I encourage everyone to either express their interest in joining a Working Group or submit their suggestions or ideas.

Details of how to participate and contribute will be provided shortly via e-mail and on WyeSep Connect.

- **Frank Buchanan**

### **Expert Panel**

A panel of bushfire and building experts was recently convened by Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley to review the bushfire risk management approach for the rebuilding at Wye River and Separation Creek.

The panel includes world class experts, who have previously provided strategic advice and direction on key bushfire issues such as Community Fire Refuges. The panel members are:

- John Mealia, Fire and Emergency Management Specialist
- Justin Leonard, Bushfire Expert at CSIRO
- John Shaw, Principal Technical Advisor at Victorian Building Authority
- Stephen Kip, Fire Safety Engineer & Building Surveyor
- Dr Ian Bennetts, Civil and Fire Safety Engineer

The Expert Panel recently conducted a review into the 2016 Wye River and Separation Creek Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) Assessment Study Report (the Wye/Sep Report), and looked at lessons learnt from the post bushfire analysis undertaken by CFA and CSIRO. This review will be released shortly.

There are two key pieces of work being undertaken by the Expert Panel:

1. Dr Kevin Tolhurst, University of Melbourne and Justin Leonard, CSIRO, alongside the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, are currently considering the types of modified fuels and bushfire hazard mapping used in the report and options to reduce bushfire exposure (particularly sites subject to flame zone outcomes) for the settlement.
2. The Expert Panel will also provide advice on building design and construction standards both at individual sites and street scape to achieve efficient and effective bushfire resistant rated buildings, that also achieve an acceptable level of township resilience to bushfire overall.

The Expert Panel will be working with the Wye River and Separation Creek community to develop a voluntary community supported bushfire resilience guideline for individual sites and the township.

This will involve developing a list of options in terms of efficient and effective building design and construction standards, 'good-practice' elements, and outlining the importance of street scape building siting, design and construction and lessons learnt from the bushfire.

The guideline will be for the whole community, including areas not impacted by the fire, to achieve a whole of community response to bushfire resilience.

The guideline is intended to work within the current building policy and regulations for bushfire prone areas however will look at voluntary additional efficient and effective options that provide individual properties and the township with improved resilience to bushfires.

#### ASSET PROTECTION ZONE REVIEW

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will be facilitating engagement through identified 'neighbourhood' groups, which are properties assessed as having similar circumstances around bushfire risk and options to improve resilience.

The discussions of the neighbourhood groups will be made available to the whole community.

It is envisioned this work will commence in the coming weeks, however it may take some time to be completed.

#### IMPROVING TOWN RESILIENCE

The Expert Panel will be running community workshops to develop the bushfire resilience guideline, and throughout that process will provide a running draft and regular updates to the VBA and the One Stop Shops to ensure the information is utilised through one-on-one discussions with community members.

They will work with the Community Resilience Committee to ensure all community concerns and questions are captured outside of the workshops. They will also work with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, and provide information to architects, builders and building surveyors working on the rebuild.

The Expert Panel will be running an initial workshop on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May to help set the direction for the guidelines, and aim to provide quick initial advice to community members who already have planning approval, or who need to rebuild in short timeframes.

They will provide a running draft and work closely with the VBA, and this information will be able to be assessed by the community through the One Stop Shops.

The guidelines will be completed by the expert panel once the community is appropriately consulted.

The first open Community Workshop will be held at **5:30pm on Friday 13 May** at the State Control Centre – Level 4, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne.

To register your attendance either in-person or via teleconference, please do so here <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/wye-river-and-separation-creek-community-workshop-tickets-25253523970>

Please note that for security purposes at the State Control Centre, you **must** register if you are attending in person.

## Repair and Replacement of Retaining Walls

Colac Otway Shire is working closely with the State Government to assess damage to retaining walls that pose a risk to public safety throughout Wye River and Separation Creek, both on private and public land.

Colac Otway Shire is contacting land owners who need to repair or replace retaining walls.

The Shire and State Government are also looking at the construction method for new retaining walls, taking into consideration that the majority of timber retaining walls were destroyed in the fire.

A Fact Sheet about Retaining Walls and their repair or replacement will be sent to all residents shortly.

## Wellbeing and Personal Support

Travelling the road to recovery: The bushfire recovery process

Dr. Rob Gordon is a clinical psychologist who has been a consultant to the Department of Health and Human Services since 1989 for disaster recovery.

Over the next few weeks he will share insights into the emotional journey many affected residents of Wye River and Separation Creek currently face and may encounter in the future.

He will also explore why you may be feeling the way you do and provide tips for your emotional recovery. This is the third article in Dr Gordon's five part 'Travelling the Road to Recovery' series.

*In coming weeks, the community will be coming up to the six-month mark after the fires.*

*It will be winter, it will be cold, and we notice and research internationally shows that about six months after a disaster is often the time when you get a high peak of requests for psychological assistance and support.*

*I think it works this way: because in the early phases people are very active and busy and focused entirely on the physical problems.*

*If you've lost your house, you've got to find somewhere to live, you've got to buy things.*

*If it's your holiday house you've got to actually negotiate clean-up and start thinking about what you're going to do and take stock of your finances and argue with insurance companies and so on.*

*After about six months, people have gone through a lot of that and they're feeling very tired.*

*Their life has been very stressful and busy for the last six months, and when they get into this period of less activity but great fatigue, that's often when their emotional pain kicks in.*

*People are at greater risk of depression or just plain sadness, or they feel irritable and frustrated with people.*

*The differences are starting to show up in people's circumstances and people are very sensitive to judgemental comments from each other, as people compare.*

*Consequently there is often a period of turmoil around about this period.*

*I think it's very important that people look forward to that period and consider what kind of supports are going to help them get through that, whether it be community-based or personal.*

People who are experiencing high levels of distress should visit with their local GP or health care provider.

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

If urgent support is needed please don't hesitate to call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or BeyondBlue on 1300 224 636 or visit [betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au).

## Free Health Checks available

Don't forget the Lorne Community Hospital and Lorne Medical Centre are offering comprehensive medical health checks to all Wye River and Separation Creek residents.

There will be no out of pocket expenses for residents who decide to take this positive step for their own health.

During the appointment additional ways to support your health can be discussed, and FREE Flu shots will also be offered.

Appointments will be available until Wednesday, 18 May.

Wye River and Separation Creek community members can make an appointment for the free service by phoning Lorne Medical Centre on 5289 4333.