

# Community Resilience Newsletter

## Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

16 MAY 2016

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

### Expert Panel Workshops

The first of the Expert Panel Community Workshops was held on Friday 13<sup>th</sup>, with more than 60 residents attending.

The focus of the Workshop was to look at a bushfire risk management approach for the rebuilding at Wye River and Separation Creek.

The Expert Panel wanted to engage in an independent discussion with the community along with specialist Shire and agency staff.

A similar workshop will be held in Wye River this Saturday from 10:30am – 12:30pm at the Surf Life Saving Club.

### Paddy's Path Update

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Otway Coast Committee continue to address the hazards and risks to residents of Wye River and Separation Creek, when using Paddy's Path.

Residents and visitors are asked to continue to observe the safety barriers on Paddy's Path which have been put in place due to the instability of the path, caused by the Christmas Day bushfire.

Following the Grocon clean-up on Iluka Avenue, the fire driven debris across the reserve has been removed, hazardous trees have been assessed and treated, and an assets impact assessment completed.

A geotechnical assessment on the stability of the path and upslope risks is underway with the report expected by the end of May.

Works are planned on the path in the short term with a specialised walking track contractor to replace path infrastructure and implement recommendations from the geotechnical report for risk mitigation.

### What's On

#### Expert Panel – Community Discussion

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May, 10:30am – 12:30pm

Wye River SLSC

#### 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

Input from the community was gathered during a series of 'Open Houses' held throughout March and April on how the path is used and how it should look and feel.

From this information and community feedback, improvements to the path to connect to the new Separation Creek bridge will be made while continuing to respect the views and informal nature of the path.

Paddy's Path is an important part of Wye and Sep and its reopening is a priority, as is everyone's safety.

### CRC Work Groups

Nominations have now closed for the Community Resilience Committee Work Groups.

Details about each of the Work Groups and their membership will be made available shortly, including how the Group will be meeting, how community members can become involved and how to raise issues or questions to be discussed by the Group.

The CRC is meeting this Saturday and community members are invited to share their concerns or questions with the CRC members for discussion and resolution.

## From the Mayor

It is great to be back on deck following a short time off due to illness.

There continues to be a great deal of activity in the resettlement and recovery space right now with the Expert Panel running community workshops, the CRC Work Groups getting up and running, repair and replacement work on high risk retaining walls commencing and the first planning application being submitted.

The One Stop Shop continues to expand with Coffey and the VBA available to provide advice.

A number of you have already taken advantage of the One Stop Shops to come in and discuss your ideas and plans.

You must book an appointment, via the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre, to ensure the right experts are available to assist you.

Appointments can be made for both in person and teleconference appointments.

We have a Community Resilience Committee meeting this Saturday, so if you have an issue or question you would like me to raise, please e-mail [bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au) and I will add it for discussion.

- **Frank Buchanan**

## From the Emergency Management Commissioner

Over the past few weeks there has been great energy and discussion within the community and with agencies on the resettlement of Wye River and Separation Creek.

On Friday 13 May the Expert Panel held their first Community Workshop, looking at a bushfire risk management approach for the rebuilding at Wye River and Separation Creek.

Although I wasn't able to attend I have heard good feedback about how it went. The goal of the Expert Panel is to help improve the resilience and safety of the community, while supporting community members to rebuild in the most effective and efficient way.

The Panel members are working hard to pull together key considerations and information sourced from a variety of areas into a single 'guideline' for the community. They are the best in the world at what they do, and I encourage all of you to attend the next workshop on Saturday 21 May at the Wye River SLSC.

As well as engaging the services of the Expert Panel the state government, shire and agencies are all working hard to support the community to resettle.

There is a considerable amount of work being undertaken, from clean-up to infrastructure works, the One Stop Shop and streamlining planning approvals, to developing a beachscape and public facilities that the community wants.

Over the next few months there will be a number of engagement opportunities to ensure the resettlement process meets the needs of the community.

The agencies involved in resettling are working together to try and facilitate timely engagement and provide multiple options for community members to be involved.

However, there are some aspects of the resettlement that may not require engagement with the community, for example during clean-up where there are significant safety risks and decisions will be made based on that.

In my role as Emergency Management Commissioner I have the responsibility to lead for the state the end-to-end process of emergency management, which includes the recovery phase.

This provides a wonderful opportunity to work with communities through the hardship and also the opportunities that are created after an emergency.

It's a pleasure to work with Wye River and Separation Creek community and I look forward to the resettlement over the coming months and years.

One of the key issues that we all must acknowledge is the need to include other communities through this process, including Kennett River, as it is not just the impact areas of Wye River and Separation Creek that is the focus.

As well as working closely with the Community Resilience Committee I continue to talk to a lot of community members about their journey so far, and the challenges and opportunities they now face.

Everyone is at a different point in their journey, however it is heartening to hear some really positive stories and I thank them for sharing these with me.

- **Craig Lapsley**

## Clean-up

Although the inclement weather has caused a few delays over the past week, Grocon has made good progress and 105 properties have now been cleaned.

There are nine crews working across Wye River with multiple crews operating on each street.

In the coming weeks, homeowners will begin to receive notices of completion from Grocon along with environmental certification that their property is clean and safe.

If any property owners have any questions, please contact the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 03 5232 9400 (select 1) or visit Grocon's on-site team, located near the Wye River CFA Station.

## Consent Deed reminder

Grocon has advised that a small number of residents are yet to sign and return their consent deed, which means they are unable to receive the go-ahead to clean up properties.

If you have registered for clean-up works and have not been contacted by Grocon (or have not received a copy of your scope of works), please contact Claire Hughes by phone on (03) 9631 8819 / 0407 237 429 or by e-mail [clairehughes@grocon.com.au](mailto:clairehughes@grocon.com.au).

However, if you have registered but have not signed your scope of works, please do so as early as possible and email it to Claire Hughes so that Grocon can include your property

Clean-up works on your property cannot occur without a signed scope of works.

If you are unsure whether your property is part of Grocon's clean-up efforts, please contact Claire Hughes via the contact details listed above.

Grocon encourages all property owners to pass this information on to friends and neighbours in Wye River, to ensure this information is shared far and wide.

If any property owners have any questions, please contact the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 03 5232 9400 (select 1) or visit Grocon's on-site team, located near the Wye River CFA Station.

## Wye River Playground Renewal Project

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Otway Coast Committee (OCC) are planning a workshop with interested members of the community to develop the design for Wye River Playground renewal.

Ideas for how the playground should look and feel were gathered during the 'Open House' series run by DELWP throughout March and April.

With the assistance of the City of Melbourne's Studio Design Team, the workshop will enable children, parents and stakeholders to help shape playground themes and play pieces to be included in the design brief.

If you would like to participate in this workshop, please register at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/wye-river-playground-design-workshop-tickets-25472056607>

## DELWP Community Engagement

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Barwon South West has released its latest community engagement milestone report regarding the flora, fauna and beachscape resettlement projects for Wye River and Separation Creek.

The report includes next steps on the nine key public land projects including: Paddy's Path, Wye River Walk, Wye River Playground, Foreshore Campground Kitchen and Office, Forest Road Vegetation Management, Post Fire weed Management, Pump Reinstatement Project, waste water Treatment and Integrated Vegetation management in Wye River and Separation Creek.

The report can be found on WyeSep Connect.

## Water Tank

Colac Otway Shire continues to work with the Wye River and Separation Creek community to determine the best temporary location of the water tank, donated by the Lions Club of Lorne.

A longer term, more permanent location for the water tank will be determined following consultation with the community.

This water tank will provide water for the residents and the broader community, as well as for use in the community garden in Harrington Park.

## Wellbeing and Personal Support

Travelling the road to recovery: Looking after yourself and your family's wellbeing

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.

Throughout the last few weeks, Dr Gordon has been sharing insights into the emotional journey many affected residents of Wye River and Separation Creek currently face and may have encountered and may encounter in the future.

He has also explored why you may be feeling the way you do and provide tips for your emotional recovery.

This is the fourth article in Dr Gordon's five part 'Travelling the Road to Recovery' series.

*What people should be looking for in themselves and in their families is several things that they may not be used to.*

*Firstly the loss of the house or the property has a very disruptive effect on people's lives, whether it's your principal place of residence that you lived in, or whether it's a refuge you went to weekly or even monthly.*

*It's part of a set of routines and rhythms in your life and we know that those are enormously supportive to people's lifestyle.*

*It's those rhythms and routines that give them the kind of support systems that allow them to manage stress and uncertainty.*

*When this is disrupted a lot of other problems are harder to deal with.*

*We think it's very important that people monitor their stress levels and be aware that they probably need to be more careful and use their own successful stress management techniques to take care of themselves during this time.*

*The big temptation is to put your head down and go like hell to try and get through it all.*

*The problem is that they can't determine the pace.*

*They can't determine the pace of planning permit approvals, of insurance decisions, and so they keep hitting these brick walls.*

*They want to get it done quickly, but they can't. When you're going hell-for-leather and you hit brick walls, there's a big impact.*

*It's very important for people to recognise the mental stress state they get in, which is to get very narrowed and focused on goals, which they can't control.*

*Instead they should bring their attention back to themselves and to their family.*

*They need to consider what they need to do to take care of themselves, and keeping going with all of the things that manage our stress in normal life – recreation, enjoyment, talking with people who care about you, exercise, diet and so on.*

*Don't let any of that go because it's going to make the whole process much, much harder.*

*What we would expect people to see is irritability and anger, short-temperedness, friction – not just with authorities that won't be able to respond fast enough but with each other and their families and their loved ones.*

*There's very often a mismatch between their families and friends who haven't been through this experience, and who begin to have expectations that aren't realistic – "Haven't you got your approvals yet?" "What have you been doing?"*

*This may then create states where people find their mood fluctuating, they're coming from anger and irritability into feeling sad and overwhelmed.*

*Exhaustion makes that worse; sleep problems; temptations to drink, smoke, eat too much; feeling you don't have the energy to exercise in your normal way.*

*So there's a tendency for people's whole lifestyles to slip.*

*So we could say over the next three months it's going to be very important for people to try and be proactive about monitoring and dealing with their stress levels.*

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

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](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au).

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