

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

23 MAY 2016

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

Expert Panel Workshops

On Friday 13 and Saturday 21 May, the Expert Panel held Community Workshops in both Melbourne and Wye River, looking at a bushfire risk management approach for the rebuilding at Wye River and Separation Creek.

The goal of the Expert Panel is to help improve the overall resilience and safety of the community, while supporting community members to rebuild in the most effective and efficient way.

Following an initial review and scoping of work the Panel has developed an *Action Plan and Approach* for how they will support the rebuilding of Wye River and Separation Creek – details of this approach are available on WyeSep Connect.

Following input from the community at the first two workshops, the Panel members are currently pulling together key considerations and information sourced from a variety of areas into a single voluntary 'guideline' for the community.

These first two workshops were designed for the community to voice their concerns, questions and suggestions.

While there were representatives there from the major agencies and organisations and Council involved in the resettlement of Wye River and Separation Creek, these initial workshops were designed for the community to share their views with the Expert Panel.

Future discussions will continue to provide information and address concerns around key topics such as vegetation and town protection, options for low or non-combustible materials, siting of buildings and landscape considerations and costed building case studies.

For those community members unable to attend the workshops the draft will be made available via WyeSep Connect, the Community Resilience Committee and the Planning, Building and Fire Work Group, as well as being placed on WyeSep Connect.

What's On

Waste Water Workshop

Saturday 28th May, 1-4pm

Wye River SLSC

Playground Design Workshop

Sunday 29th May, 10am-12 noon

Wye River SLSC

Community Vision Workshop

Saturday 11th June

Wye River SLSC

A community lunch will held as part of the workshop.

Controlling our Weeds and Helping our Birds Workshop

Sunday 12th June, 11am with a community lunch afterwards and the planting of 300 native plants

Wye River SLSC

Details of future workshops will provided to the community via direct e-mail, the newsletter and on WyeSep Connect.

Community Resilience Committee Work Groups

The CRC Work Groups have been finalised and details of each of the work groups, their membership and how to engage with them with be provided on WyeSep Connect.

The Work Groups 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

From the Mayor

The Community Resilience Committee met in Melbourne on Saturday and we discussed a range of topics including the upcoming Vision Workshop during the June long weekend, the development of the CRC Work Groups and ongoing Community Engagement activities that will continue to provide everyone with the chance to voice their opinions.

We noted that it was five months since the bushfire and that many things have happened during that time but how it is also important to acknowledge and respect that we will all be moving at a different pace.

It is exciting that we have received three planning permit applications – so for some residents, the time is right for them to get the building process started.

For others, there is still a lot of research to be done, discussions with family members and insurers.

We have had some terrific feedback from residents who have met with the One Stop Shop team and were really pleased with the tailored advice, specific to their property.

It is still critical that you book an appointment at the One Stop Shop so that we can make sure the right people are there on the day.

Please also note that if there aren't any bookings for appointments, the One Stop Shop may not be open.

To make an appointment for either an in person or teleconference appointment, please contact the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 5232 9400 (select 1) or e-mail bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au

A couple of changes are on the way for the newsletter. From June, we will be transitioning to a fortnightly newsletter with dedicated updates from each of the Work Groups.

If you have anything you would like to see in the newsletter or on WyeSep Connect, please let us know as your feedback is important

I encourage everyone from across the Wye and Sep communities to be involved in discussions about the future of the towns.

These forums are open to everyone, not only those whose properties were damaged or destroyed in the fire, but to all residents and holiday makers.

- **Frank Buchanan**

From the Community Resilience Committee

It's now five months since the fire, and people are moving at their own pace through the recovery process.

The response seen through people reaching out and supporting each other is heart warming, and more formal support is available if that is what would help.

It is important to say thanks to the hundreds of people working every day to get Wye and Sep back on its feet.

To COS who were engaged in planning for recovery even before the fire hit, to those who staffed the Bushfire Recovery Call Centre set up on Boxing Day, and the Shire team whose sole focus is to deliver the best outcomes for Wye and Sep, through to DELWP who were there fighting the fire and are now so heavily engaged in the renewal effort, and EMV who are quietly behind the scene of what of much is happening, we say thank you. Thanks too to the Interim Recovery Committee who found places for people to live, the CFA for whom there aren't words to express our gratitude, the SLSC and to the many other individuals and agencies not listed, thank you as well.

Your input in letting us know how you think we are doing is very valuable. The major focus so far has been on immediate needs, but it is time for us to pause and think about how we would like our community to look in five years and ten years time.

This will help to guide the continuing development and delivery of the Resettlement Plan, which directs the recovery effort, and the focus of the agencies involved and give you ownership of the future direction, look and feel of our community.

We are inviting the whole community to come together at Wye River on June 11 for a forum where you can share your thoughts about the future direction of Wye River and Separation Creek.

There have been many plans, documents, and surveys produced over the last few years, so the day won't be heavy on speakers...the most important participant is you.

The forum will start mid-morning and include a community lunch. We will arrange a bus to bring people from and to Melbourne if there is a demand.

We hope you can make it – the forum is for all the community, not only those who have suffered property loss or damage.

The future is for everyone!

The outcome will be a statement that describes our vision and guiding principles, determined by the community voice.

Frank Buchanan Co-Chair

Joanne Tyler Acting Co-Chair.

Clean-up

Victoria is living up to its name of having ‘four seasons in one day’ with wet and windy conditions followed by sunshine and warm temps in Wye River.

Fortunately the weather has not had any significant impact on Grocon’s work with more than 20 crews continuing to make significant headways in cleaning up Wye River.

To date, 126 properties have been cleaned and clean-up works at Separation Creek are now completed. Property owners will now receive an environmental certificate to confirm works are complete.

Clean-up in Wye River is steadily progressing and property owners who have not signed up for the coordinated clean-up now have until Tuesday 31 May to register.

Please contact Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 03 5322 9400 (select 1) to register and a Grocon representative will be in touch to talk you through the process.

Property owners who are not taking part in the coordinated clean-up with Grocon will be issued with emergency orders to clean-up their property, including Fact Sheets on what is required.

Wye River Playground Renewal Project

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Otway Coast Committee (OCC) are holding a community workshop this Sunday to develop the design for Wye River Playground’s renewal.

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

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

The workshop will be held on Sunday 29th May from 10am to 12pm at the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club.

Paddy’s Path

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Otway Coast Committee continue to address the hazards and risks to using Paddy’s Path.

The community should continue to observe the safety barriers on Paddy’s Path due to the impacts of the fire on path stability.

Following Grocon’s clean-up efforts in 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 shortly.

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.

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

From this, DELWP will include improvements to the path to connect to the new Separation Creek bridge and continue to respect the views and informal nature of the path that the community values.

Weeds and Birds Workshop

A workshop will be held 12th June on *Controlling our weeds and helping our birds*.

Arranged by Wye Weed Warriors, this workshop will be in layman’s terms for local landowners and residents.

It will cover:

- Our ‘bad’ weeds – how to identify and kill them
- Looking after our birds – free bird boxes!
- Village wide weed program
- Planting of ‘good’ local vegetation

This practical workshop will start at 11am on Sunday 12th June at the Wye SLSC, followed by a BBQ.

After the BBQ, for those who can help, there will be a planting of 300 native plants in a suitable location in the village.

For enquiries or to just let us know you are coming for catering purposes, please contact Yvonne 0407 883 116 – or Rex 0408 006 992

Wellbeing and Personal Support

Travelling the road to recovery: The final piece of advice

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 past few months he has shared insights into the emotional journey many affected residents of Wye River and Separation Creek currently face 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 final article in Dr Gordon's five part 'Travelling the Road to Recovery' series.

We know the big problem long term with disasters is what I call degraded quality of life.

That is when people's lives become totally focused around the disaster, the recovery, rebuilding and resettlement, at the expense of everything else.

The problem is that it's going to take so long that when people come out the other side, if they've neglected everything else, it doesn't all come back again.

If we don't maintain our attention to relationships, to our children, to our recreational activities, to our career, and to our health, then over two or three years they may suffer irreversible changes.

Many of the longer term problems are not so much to do with the material losses and the material impact of the fire, but to do with the way in which the whole of people's lives suffers and can't get back to where it was.

It's therefore being aware of this at the early stages and looking ahead, and prioritising all of the normal supports that make life valuable and meaningful, alongside the tremendous task for reconstruction.

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 www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au.

BOM sets up weather station in Wye River

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has placed a Portable Automatic Weather Station (PAWS) in Wye River to help monitor the weather conditions around Wye River and Separation Creek.

PAWS is an instrument that can be set up in remote areas, where there is a possible gap in the weather observation network.

The unit, which runs on solar power, is able to monitor wind, temperature, rainfall and relative humidity.

PAWS units have been used extensively during bushfires and also have a range of uses after an emergency or natural disaster, as it can provide localised weather conditions and help advise clean-up efforts in bushfire-affected areas.

It is important that BOM closely monitors the weather events in Wye River and Separation Creek due to the on-ground risks caused after the bushfires, such as the potential for landslides.

Data observations collected from the PAWS unit are available via the [BOM website](#).

Upcoming Events

Wiggle Amy's Grand Fondo

Wiggle Amy's Gran Fondo is a world-class cycling event held on fully closed roads in one of the world's most idyllic destinations – the Great Ocean Road.

With almost 6,000 riders taking part in 2015, the event has established itself as one of the most popular mass participation rides in Australia, offering a distance for every type of bike rider.

These distances include; 120km Gran Fondo, 45km Medio Fondo and the 14km Family Fondo.

The event takes place over two days - Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September 2016.

Wiggle Amy's Gran Fondo places a huge emphasis on safety, with all participants required to complete a safety briefing before riding.

Details of the event, including road closures between Lorne and Apollo Bay, will be provided to all residents of Wye River and Separation Creek via mail as well as in the newsletter, e-mails and on WyeSep Connect.

For more information visit <http://amysgranfondo.org.au/>