

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

7 JUNE 2016

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

Wye River Separation Creek Community Workshop - Determining Our Future

Since the 2015 Christmas Day Bushfires in Wye River and Separation Creek (WRSC), Colac Otway Shire, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) have worked together to ensure that the community is able to access the assistance needed to support their recovery and maximise their ability to rebuild and resettle with minimum barriers over the coming weeks, months and years, in a way that is safe, timely, efficient, cost effective and respectful of those different needs.

This work has been consolidated within the WRSC Resettlement Plan which identifies the range of actions that need to be delivered by government agencies in the short to medium term to facilitate the rebuilding and resettlement effort to occur.

Supported by Colac Otway Shire and Emergency Management Victoria, the Wye River Separation Creek Community Resilience Committee (CRC) has been established to facilitate communication and engagement and ensure the recovery process is inclusive of the whole community.

Co-Chaired by the Mayor of Colac Shire and a community representative, the Committee includes representation from the Chief Executive Colac Otway Shire, the Emergency Management Commissioner and eight community representatives.

The CRC has established four Work Groups, focusing on the following areas, to assist the CRC to better understand the issues and concerns, opportunities and priorities facing the community and how it sees Wye River and Separation Creek in the future:

- Business and Tourism
- Flora, Fauna and Beachscape
- Wellbeing and Connection

- Planning, Building and Fire.

What is the purpose of the 'Determining Our Future' Community Workshop?

To discuss and achieve a consensus on what the community values most about Wye River and Separation Creek and what the priorities are to achieve this for the future.

To discuss and agree on the steps to be taken to achieve this vision.

What will the next steps be?

The outcomes of the workshop will be made available to the whole community. The CRC will use the views and information collected to:

- Inform recovery activities and opportunities, including the implementation of the short to medium actions in the Resettlement Plan
- Develop a longer term Community Renewal Plan to inform decision making to ensure local needs and aspirations are met and that details for each priority area:
 - Key initiatives, including objectives, actions and outputs
 - Identify who needs to be involved
 - Priorities / timeframe.

The CRC will continue to engage with the community in ongoing discussions as this work progresses.

There will be an opportunity for informal discussion with members of the Work Groups during and following lunch.

To assist Melbourne based people attend the Determining Our Future Workshop transport is being arranged to bring you down for the day.

A meeting point in the CBD will be organised once the numbers for the bus service are determined.

To RSVP for the Workshop or to book a seat on the bus, please e-mail the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre or phone 5232 9400 and select 1.

Planning, Building and Fire

First Planning Permit Issued

Colac Otway Shire has issued the first planning permit under the new planning framework in Wye River, with building works expected to commence later in June.

The property owner and architect utilised the streamlined process offered by the One Stop Shop and received the planning permit 28 days after it was lodged.

Waste Water

A waste water workshop was held on Tuesday 31st May where technical experts, community representatives and water businesses came together to reassess all likely options for waste water systems in Wye River and Separation Creek.

A summary table that describes the various options discussed and the impacts of the options was presented at the Wye River Community meeting on Sunday 5th June and will be available at the Community Meeting on Thursday as well as on Wye Sep Connect.

The workshop, which included community representatives as well as experts from Coffey, South East Water, Barwon Water, Yarra Valley Water, Environment Protection Authority, Victoria University, Decentralised Water Consulting, DELWP and Colac Otway Shire discussed a range of approaches that have been implemented in Australia and Victoria as well as reports on international practice.

The impacts of options, including feasibility, costs and timeliness was also considered.

The workshop identified three broad options: on-site treatment and disposal, cluster options and a pressure sewer scheme as all having relevance, but noted that on-site treatment and disposal is the only viable option in the short term.

Clean-up

Grocon has now cleaned 148 properties in Wye River and Separation Creek, which is more than 75 per cent of the total number of properties registered.

As the majority of sites are now cleaned, Grocon will issue notices of formal completion to the property owners.

This process began this week and will continue over the coming weeks.

APZ Community Engagement

Community Engagement for the Asset Protection Zone project seeks to connect the Community Resilience Committee (including the Building, Planning & Fire subcommittee), relevant agencies, independent experts and community members to discuss things like risk management, costs and benefits, likely trade-offs, how to maximize efficiency of the rebuilding process, settlement wide and neighborhood options.

A series of neighborhood cluster discussions are scheduled for 8th, 9th, 15th and 16th July, in Wye River and a field trip to observe Asset Protection Zones in the region will be held on 3rd July.

Residents will be contacted directly with information about which Neighborhood Cluster they are part of and details of neighborhood discussions.

Flora, Fauna and Beachscape

Landscaping Your Coastal Garden For Bushfire

Colac Otway Shire is developing a booklet for residents living in coastal communities, including Wye River and Separation Creek to help landholders reduce their bushfire risk through appropriate property design, development, and maintenance.

The booklet is being produced with support from the Wye/Sep Weeds Short-term Project and content has been developed with input from fire behaviour experts at Council, Parks Victoria, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), CFA and Southern Otway Landcare Network.

The booklet will contain advice on the appropriate location, arrangement, type, and maintenance of vegetation to reduce your bushfire risk.

It will also include a list of indigenous plants with desirable characteristics recommended for planting, and several sample landscape plans suitable for high fire risk areas.

The booklet will be available in hard and electronic copies in coming weeks.

Paddy's Path

Following the geotechnical investigation and tree works around Wye River and Separation Creek, the Department of Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Otway Coast Committee have commenced works on Paddy's Path.

Weather permitting, these works are expected to be completed by 10 June 2016.

The work on Paddy's Path will be carried out by a specialist walking trails contractor.

The reinstatement includes replacement of the timber structures and bridge, repairing of the track surface and drainage, as well as the Separation Creek entrance to make it more pram-friendly.

Paddy's Path should be avoided whilst works are underway. Barriers will remain in place for public safety and there may be an increase in traffic around the area from construction workers.

Business and Tourism

VicRoads Update

In relation to pedestrian safety at Separation Creek Bridge, VicRoads Bridge Contractor, Bitu-Mill Civil Pty Ltd is scheduled to complete the concrete deck pour for the Lorne bound side of the Separation Creek bridge this week (subject to favourable weather).

This will include the pedestrian path section across the bridge that will already have a barrier railing. VicRoads will work with the contractor to provide a temporary gravel path to enable pedestrian access clear of the central safety barrier prior to the Queen's Birthday Weekend.

The traffic movement will continue to be under traffic signals as work continues on the ocean side, whilst work continues on the approach barriers and on the pavement for the bridge approaches for the Lorne bound traffic.

These works are likely to be completed soon after the Queen's Birthday weekend with the traffic switched over to the inland side in late June.

The remaining bridge replacement works are still scheduled to be complete in October 2016.

In addition the Boggaley Creek Bridge deck replacement and pavement works are scheduled for commencement this week.

The traffic movement will continue through this site under traffic signals as this work is carried out.

VicRoads is also working on the provision of a pedestrian refuge at Wye River, opposite the General Store.

A concept design has been developed and VicRoads has conducted site meetings with both DELWP and Colac Otway Shire regarding the development of the pedestrian refuge to discuss cost and impacts.

Connection and Wellbeing

Boost for Lorne Hospital to help bushfire recovery

The Victorian Government has announced a \$70,000 boost for the Lorne Community Hospital, to help improve support and counselling services for people affected by the Christmas Day fires in Wye River and Separation Creek.

Minister Lisa Neville announced the funding at Sunday's community meeting in Wye River.

Minister Neville said the funding will provide additional counselling services at the Hospital and also help identify community members who require more intensive or specialist support, so that they can be referred to other, more appropriate health services.

The grant is additional to the Victorian Government's \$2.75 million assistance package and \$190,000 for the CFA and Wye River Surf Life Saving Club, which were announced earlier this year.

Other health and wellbeing support services provided to the community include the Victorian Natural Disaster Trust Account providing \$250,000 to Colac Otway Shire to employ two dedicated community recovery staff members; \$250,000 in personal hardship assistance payments from the Department of Health and Human Services to assist those experiencing financial hardship; and funding for community recovery sessions facilitated by clinical psychologists with extensive experience in working with people affected by fire and other disasters.

The Government will continue to work closely with the CRC Wellbeing Work Group, Colac Otway Shire and Lorne Community Hospital to improve the community's health and wellbeing as they recover from this fire.

The Lorne Community Hospital and Lorne Medical Centre continue to provide comprehensive medical health checks to all Wye River and Separation Creek residents.

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

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

Spirit Foundation Grants

Following the Christmas Day bushfire, people from near and far generously put their hands in their pockets and donated money to assist those residents affected.

Money was raised at the events like Wye and Sep Bands Together and the Falls festival, through to tin shakes and fundraising events.

These donations are being managed and distributed by the Spirit Foundation.

Members of the initial Wye River and Separation Creek Recovery Committee are working closely with the Spirit Foundation to continue to distribute these funds to residents.

Colac Otway Shire has mailed information to residents on behalf of the Spirit Foundation advising of how they can apply for funds.

Residents with further questions can contact the Spirit Foundation directly by e-mail: thespiritfoundation2015@gmail.com

Council Rates

In January, Colac Otway Shire wrote to residents advising that all ratepayers with properties destroyed by the bushfire (excluding those owning vacant land) would receive a 100 per cent waiver of the current financial year's council rates and charges.

Residents, whose properties were not destroyed or whose access was not restricted are reminded that rates and charges payments were deferred to 30 June 2016 and are now due for payment.

Winter Weather Preparation

Since the bushfire Colac Otway Shire, EMV and Emergency Services including Victoria Police, VicSES and CFA are continuing to work together to assess and prepare for the impact of winter weather.

Residents may be contacted to determine how many people are in the townships and to provide advice on action to take in the event of severe weather.

Stay informed about severe weather warnings by listening to local and ABC radio and visiting websites like www.ses.vic.gov.au and www.emv.vic.gov.au

What's On

Community Meeting

Thursday 9th June, 5:30 – 7pm

Richmond Town Hall, Meeting Room 3

Community 'Determining our Future' Workshop

Saturday 11th June, from 10:30

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

6x6 Building Design Exhibition

Saturday 18th June,

10:00am - 2pm with presentations commencing at 10:30am

Wye River SLSC

6x6 Building Design Exhibition

Melbourne based residents will be able to see the exhibition and presentations at a Melbourne venue. Details of the date and location will be confirmed and provided shortly.

APZ Field Trip

Sunday 3rd July, time TBC

Wye River

APZ Cluster Meeting

July 8, 9, 15 and 16

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

Community Meeting

Sunday 24th July, 10:30am – 12 midday
Community Catch-up to follow

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

Community Meeting

Thursday 28th July

5:30 – 7pm

Richmond Town Hall, Meeting Room 3