

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

5 JULY 2016

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

Coastal communities reach major milestone six months after Christmas Day fires

The Wye River and Separation Creek communities are marking a number of significant milestones six months after the Christmas Day fire destroyed 109 properties and damaged many more.

The Victorian Government has worked closely with Colac Otway Shire and the Wye River and Separation Creek communities to improve public safety following the fires and supporting resettlement.

The strong collaboration and partnership between the Victorian Government, Colac Otway Shire, agencies, businesses and community has resulted in a number of milestones being reached in June:

- the completion of the clean-up of properties by Grocon;
- the streamlining of planning controls;
- the issuing of the first planning permit; and
- the commencement of the building works on a residential property.

Community members have been involved in the clean-up and resettlement process through the Community Resilience Committee, along with more than 50 community events, meetings and workshops and a dedicated website (wyeseconnect.info) to share information, provide support and enable the community to connect.

The Victorian Government is also funding the installation, replacement or repair of very high and high risk retaining walls across the townships, reducing the risk of landslip and supporting resettlement.

With the completion of the clean-up, power is being restored, a new drainage plan is being developed and the road network is being repaired.

Throughout the clean-up, planning, building, geo-tech and water experts have been meeting with residents via Government funded

'One Stop Shops' to assist them in rebuilding, along with a recent Building Design Exhibition.

The local environment and public land assets are also being managed and renewed, with the hugely popular 'Paddy's Path' walking track repaired and re-opened, and the award winning landscape architecture team from the City of Melbourne designing the Wye River playground.

Also supporting the rebuilding process is a series of assessments and technical reports commissioned by the Victorian Government on geo-tech hazards, wastewater management options, Bushfire Attack Levels and land surveying.

The Victorian Government is also helping improve the overall resilience and safety of the townships by appointing a Building and Construction Advisory Panel to support community members to rebuild in the most resilient and efficient way.

What's On in July

APZ Cluster Meetings

July 8, 9, 15 and 16

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club.

For more information visit

<http://wyeseconnect.info/exploring-apz-options-in-wyeseconnect/>

6X6 Design Exhibition

Monday 18th July, 5:30pm

Treasury Theatre, Melbourne

Community Meeting

Sunday 24th July, 10:30am – 12 midday

Community Catch-up lunch to follow

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

Community Meeting

Thursday 28th July, 5:30 – 7pm

Meeting Room 3, Richmond Town Hall Meeting

The Victorian Government has also provided almost \$250,000 in personal hardship payments, as well as \$70,000 for the Lorne Community Hospital to provide counselling and support services, in addition to free health checks already provided.

The Wye River CFA and Surf Life Saving Club have received additional grants, while \$1.4 million was allocated to the Great Ocean Road Economic and Community Recovery Package to assist businesses and communities along the Great Ocean Road, from Anglesea to Apollo Bay, impacted by the fires.

Exploring Asset Protection Zone Options for Wye River and Separation Creek

Asset Protection Zones (APZs) have been raised in community discussions as one of many ways to potentially influence future bushfire risks to Wye River and Separation Creek.

There is a great deal to assess when considering APZ's for any community and DELWP, in conjunction with Colac Otway Shire and independent bushfire experts, would like to invite residents and landholders to discuss APZs and other vegetation management options during a number of upcoming engagement opportunities including a field trip that was held last weekend and a series of Cluster Meetings and Open Houses.

Eight street-scale Cluster Meetings have been developed for neighbouring residents and landholders.

Residents have been e-mailed directly with details of which Cluster they are part of and details of the date and time for their Cluster meeting. Further information is also available on www.wyeseconnect.info including how to RSVP for Cluster meetings.

Each Cluster will explore local values and priorities, costs and benefits, and the potential effectiveness of different APZ options.

A range of agency and independent experts will be available to provide locally important information.

Participants will also be supported to work through ideas, approaches and potential solutions.

Cluster meetings are open to all interested residents and landholders.

If you are unable to attend your Cluster Meeting, but are still interested, please register a place at a nearby meeting that better suits your availability.

The eight Cluster Meetings will be held on Friday 8, Saturday 9, Friday 15 and Saturday 16 July.

Following the Cluster Meetings, a series of Open House Events will be held in Wye River and Melbourne to share the results of the Field Trip and Cluster Meetings with the wider community.

Although Cluster Meetings are open to all interested residents and landholders, properties immediately adjacent to potential APZs will receive a direct invitation during the next week inviting them to attend their specific Cluster meeting if possible.

Please note that the Cluster Meetings will be held outside and on-site (final locations still to be confirmed) unless the weather is inclement.

Clean-up Completed

Grocon has now completed the clean-up on all properties in Wye River and Separation Creek.

Property owners who were part of the clean-up program will receive a formal notification of completion within the next fortnight and will then be issued relevant environmental and surveying certification.

The formal notification is pending final tree management works, agreed to with the property owner. Post tree management works property owners will receive a final notification of completion.

Under the arrangements between the Victorian Government and the Insurance Council of Australia, up to \$25,000 of clean-up costs per property will be covered by insurers (or private land owners) and costs of more than \$25,000 per property will be paid by the Victorian Government. Final costs for the clean-up of each property are being provided to insurers to recover their contribution.

Where property owners have been paid out by their insurer, arrangements will be made to advise them of the final cost, so that contribution payments can be made to the Victorian Government.

6x6 Design Exhibition Melbourne

Melbourne based WyeSep property owners will have the opportunity to view the '6x6' Design Exhibition and speak with the architects on Monday 18 July at Treasury Theatre in Melbourne's CBD.

The exhibition, curated by Edwards Moore Architects and commissioned by the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, will enable Melbourne based community members to hear from six different architects about designing and building homes in townships similar to Wye River and Separation Creek.

Victorian Government Architect, Jill Garner, will host the event which, in addition to the presentations, will provide an opportunity for guests to ask questions in a panel style session.

Each Architect will give a 15 minute presentation about their design, outlining the client brief, challenges they faced, good design considerations and outlining budgets and fee structures.

Representatives from Colac Otway Shire, the Victorian Building Authority and DELWP will be in attendance to assist community members with queries about the planning permit application processes.

Common themes shared by the architects at the Wye River event included the importance of designing for elements such as fire and coastal winds from the beginning rather than modifying existing homes; incorporating features that can be used daily, the importance of building relationships with local fire agencies, trades and builders, and understanding the topography of the township.

Planning, Building and Fire Work Group

Power Restoration Underway in Wye River

Now that Grocon has completed the clean-up of bushfire waste, power restoration works have commenced in Wye River. Electricity supply is now available to all standing homes in Karingal Drive with Durimbal Avenue next in line.

To reconnect Karingal Drive to supply, Powercor erected two replacement power poles, strung 600 metres of overhead insulated powerlines and replaced three underground cable services. They also replaced the Karingal Coryule substation.

Powercor Customer Projects Manager Ian Williams said the restoration of power to the fire-affected streets of Wye River was understandably a great relief to property owners.

“Following the restoration of power supply to Karingal Drive one of the owners texted me to say it was the best news he had had all year.”

“The next phase of works is focused on Durimbal Ave with plans to have customers reconnected by the end of July.

“Powercor are working closely with WyeSep Connect to ensure information is readily available to local residents so they know the timings of work planned and also what they need to do to reconnect their homes.”

Plans for Durimbal Avenue include the construction of a temporary substation and Low Voltage insulated powerlines followed by reinstallation of damaged underground cables and supply pits.

More information about the restoration works timeline here (<http://wyeseconnect.info/power-update-restoration-works-underway-in-wyese/>).

Property owners with queries about reconnecting existing properties should contact Powercor’s Ian Williams on 0409 799 981 during business hours.

Flora, Fauna and Beachscape

Landscaping Your Coastal Garden For Bushfire

Colac Otway Shire is developing a landscaping and garden guide for residents living in bushfire prone, coastal areas.

The booklet will serve as a guide to help landholders reduce their bushfire risk through appropriate property design, development, and maintenance.

The booklet will be produced by Colac Otway Shire Council, with support from the Wye/Sep Weeds Short-term Project.

Content has been developed with input from fire behaviour experts at Council, Parks Victoria, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), and with indigenous plant species knowledge from the Southern Otway Landcare Network as well as Planning advice from Council and input from the Building Advisory Panel.

The booklet is based on the Surf Coast Shire’s publication “Landscaping your Surf Coast garden for bushfire”, which complements the CFA’s Landscaping for Bushfire publication (<http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/landscaping-for-bushfire/>).

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 both hard and electronic copies and available to download from WyeSep Connect in the near future.

Business and Tourism

The Great Ocean Road is often tipped as a good bet for whale sightings, with Logan's Beach in Warrnambool known as one of the best places to sight Southern Right whales.

Southern Rights live in the Southern Ocean, have a smooth, black back and can grow to be around 15 metres long and weigh around 50 tonnes.

Barnacles called callosities grow on their heads, with each marking differing and making each whale easily identifiable and unique.

Logan's Beach, located just two and a half hours out of Wye River/Separation Creek, is a popular spot for Southern Rights to breed in the winter months, visiting around June to October each year. However, Warrnambool is not the only spot to spot a whale.

Matt Travers of BIG4 Wye River Holiday Park has some good advice for Whale Watching in WyeSep.

"I have seen a few whales out there, some really close to surfers. Winter months are when they migrate, and word definitely spreads quickly when a whale has been sighted," said Matt.

"The best spot to spot a whale in Wye is straight out the front, because they migrate along the entire Great Ocean Road Coast."

This year's season is expected to kick off around the July school holidays, however recent sightings of whales have already recorded, including one seen off Lorne and another off Kennett River just a few weeks ago.

The spotter caught a glimpse of a whale from Lorne's Teddy's Lookout, located just a little over 26 minutes out of Wye River, off the shore from St George River in Lorne.

Previous records included a spotting of two Southern Right whales and possibly a calf heading from Kennett River towards Wye River around August 2015. Orcas have been seen just 200m offshore in Kennett River, Humpbacks have headed south from Fairhaven and a number of Southern Rights have been spotted in Torquay, Apollo Bay, Wongarra and Warrnambool.

Those interested can register to receive Whale Sighting alerts and updates via email with any new and verified whale sightings in the region, all listing date, time and sighting location.

If you spot a whale, we'd love you to send us a pic either to the WyeSep Connect website or Facebook page!

Connection and Wellbeing

The Directors of the Spirit Foundation are pleased to announce the latest and largest distribution of funds to members of the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek impacted by the bushfires on Christmas Day.

This distribution brings the total of funds paid to community members to approximately \$350,000. The latest and largest dispersal of funds has gone to assist those in the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek who have been affected by the fires. The impact ranges from total loss of homes to severe financial hardship as a result of the fires.

Funds donated to the Spirit Foundation came from many sources; money donated at tin rattles, proceeds of fundraising events, money donated by the Falls Music & Arts Festival from ticket sales and individual and corporate donations made directly to the Fund's bank account.

The Directors wish to extend their thanks to everyone who helped by donating, organising fundraising events, rattling tins at functions all around the coast and providing assistance in myriad ways.

The Chairman of the Spirit Foundation, Clive Goldsworthy said. "We are pleased that we were able to activate the Fund to assist the Wye and Sep Communities and we have seen another amazing example of how the coastal communities of the Surf Coast look out for one another".

Clive went on to say, "we wish to thank the members of the Wye River and Separation Creek Bushfire Recovery Committee who have worked tirelessly to identify those in the communities most in need and to advise the Directors of the Spirit Foundation as to how best to utilize the money collected".

The Spirit Foundation is a registered charitable trust established to raise money and provide financial assistance to members of our Surf Coast communities who find themselves in necessitous circumstances.

For further information, contact the Spirit Foundation Chairman, Clive Goldsworthy by email:

thespiritfoundation2015@gmail.com