

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

Reducing the risk

Grocon has released diagrams on <http://wyeseconnect.info> outlining the works they will be undertaking to reduce the risks of landslides on High and Very High risk sites in Wye River and Separation Creek.

The diagrams detail the types of works being considered, including the installation, repair or replacement of retaining walls or other measures, such as the removal of fill or at-risk driveways, or the installation of pits and pipes.

The diagrams can be found [here](#)

Any location marked for work by Grocon has been identified by a geotechnical expert. Currently there are approximately 46 sites across the townships marked as High or Very High Risk, with a further 23 being closely monitored in case they become High Risk. If the 23 sites become High Risk due to weather impacts, Grocon will re-release the diagram.

Colac Otway Shire has attempted to contact all property owners where works are due to occur, as well as all neighbouring properties to ensure they are aware of the works. Neighbouring properties are not necessarily at risk or directly affected by the works.

If the High or Very High risk site is on private property, Grocon will be contacting the property owner directly with a geotechnical report and recommended work and/or design for the property owner to review and discuss. All work is approved by an independent structural engineer.

Grocon aims to complete all Very High Risk sites first, however it may take up to four or five months for all permanent solutions to be completed.

Work has already started on three sites, with a further two awaiting structural engineer certification. The most visible work is a retaining wall on Durimbil Avenue, Wye River, that is currently being completed.

Private property owners are also advised to undertake work to ensure their property does not pose a geotechnical risk. Private property owners who need to conduct works, such as the installation or repair of retaining walls, will receive orders of work from Colac Otway Shire

Community meeting dates

The next community meetings have been scheduled. Please note that the Wye River meeting will be held on a Saturday to avoid Father's Day. The community meeting dates are:

Thursday, 1 September, 5.30pm-7pm

Room 3, Richmond Town Hall

And

Saturday, 3 September, 10.30am-12 noon

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

A community lunch will follow the Wye River meeting.

What's On in August/September

Melbourne community meeting

Thursday, 1 September, 5.30pm-7pm

Room 3, Richmond Town Hall

Wye River community meeting

Saturday, 3 September, 10.30am-12 noon

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

Bird Box Project BBQ

Tuesday 30 August, 11.30am-1.30pm

Stribling Reserve

Otway Street, Lorne

Trees on public land

Colac Otway Shire and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) are currently going through a process of identifying and assessing hazardous trees on public land in Wye River and Separation Creek.

Public land in Wye River and Separation Creek is managed by different agencies depending on type and location. For Colac Otway Shire, this includes land managed for public purposes, including Harrington Park, roads or drainage reserves. The Council is currently engaging an independent arborist to undertake a hazardous tree assessment in these areas.

While Council will be guided by the arborist's assessments, it will work with the arborist to identify maintenance, rather than removal strategies wherever possible. However, where arborists identify that a tree poses a risk to public safety, the tree will be removed in line with normal land management practices.

The arborist's assessments will be made public.

The Otway Coast Committee of Management manages Crown Land reserves, including Paddy's Path, the foreshore and the foreshore caravan park. DELWP crews are working with the Otway Coast Committee of Management to identify and address any risk mitigation work required in these areas. DELWP crews have now assessed Paddy's Path twice and undertaken the works required to mitigate risks to path users and users of the Great Ocean Road.

Only minor tree works have been undertaken on Paddy's Path in consideration of the sensitivity of the landscape. DELWP will continue to monitor and assess the situation.

Council rate notices

Property owners in Wye River and Separation Creek will have recently received their rate notices for 2016/17.

All residents who had dwellings destroyed by the Christmas Day fires had their rates waived for 2015/16. The rate notices for these properties in 2016/17 are based on the land value for these sites.

Those property owners who still had restricted access to their dwellings or limited access to utilities as at June 30, 2016 have also received payment extensions for their 2015/16 rates. These property owners have been separately notified of this and are not required to pay their 2015/16 rates until 15 February 2017.

Property owners will note that 2016 is also a revaluation year. If you believe your valuation is incorrect, you must ask for it to be reviewed before October 6, 2016. Details of how to do this are on page two of your rates notice or phone Colac Otway Shire on 5232 9400.

Property owners struggling to pay their rates can also apply for hardship consideration by following the directions on their rates notice or phoning Council.

Have your say – Suggestion Boxes landing soon

Wye River and Separation Creek residents are reminded to have their say on the future of the community. A workshop in July produced a draft vision for the area and the Community Resilience Committee would like to hear from as many people in the community as possible to get their ideas and suggestions on what they would like Wye River and Separation Creek to look like in five and ten years' time.

Suggestion boxes are located at the Wye General Store and the Wye Beach Hotel.

You can also complete a short online survey [here](#) by Sunday 21 August.

All suggestions will help guide the ongoing development of the Resettlement Plan, which shapes the future of the two communities and the work of the Community Resilience Committee.

Community recognises contribution

Chopper pilot Peter Neilly, who flew firefighting aircraft during the Wye River and Separation Creek Christmas Day bushfire, has thanked the community for recognising the air crews' efforts.

Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley met Peter in Canada recently to thank him for his efforts to protect lives and homes, and support firefighters on the ground.

Craig presented Peter with a thank you certificate Wye River and Separation Creek community members made. The certificate will be given to all pilots and air support teams involved in the bushfire, most of them live and work overseas and are currently involved in flying firefighting aircraft in the US.

Peter said it was overwhelming for the pilots and air support crews to be recognised by the Wye River and Separation Creek community as it was an extremely tough fire to fight.

Listen to Peter's message to the Wye River and Separation Creek communities. ([Link to clip](#))

Bird Box BBQ

Community members are invited to participate in the Wye to Wongarra Land Care Group Bird Box Project to help replace the habitat of birds and small marsupials that was lost in the Christmas Day fires.

If you would like to participate, come along to the Bird Box Project BBQ at:

Lorne Men's Shed

Stribling Reserve

40 Smith Street, Lorne

Tuesday, 30 August, 11.30am-1pm

RSVP: Jay Robinson 0416 166 186

Colac-Otway Shire has provided funds to buy the materials, and further funding from other agencies is being sought for installation.

The boxes need to be installed by qualified arborists high up in the trees to attract and be suitable for their anticipated inhabitants. As part of the project, arborists will also create artificial hollows as alternative habitat accommodation in other suitable trees.

The nest boxes are available at no cost and community members can order from a selection of boxes suitable for King Parrots, Rosellas, Kookaburras, Pardalotes, Micro-bats, Sugar-Gliders and Possums. It is not necessary to state a preference – the local wildlife will decide if they take up residence in the box.

To order a nest box for your property, contact Yvonne Sheppard via 0407 883 116 or oldshep2@bigpond.com and provide your name, phone and email address, property address and preferred species type of habitat box. Property owners will be contacted when installations commence.

Geotechnical training conducted

On Monday 8 August, a geotechnical expert engaged by Emergency Management Victoria conducted training for 28 members from Victoria Police, SES the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, VicRoads and Parks Victoria to provide them with further insight into land movement and landslide risks in Wye River and Separation Creek.

The training was designed to assist the participants in identifying unusual land movement in the fire affected areas.

Participants undertook a tour of the fire affected area, where the expert was able to indicate current ground movement and potential changes to watch for in the landscape.

The expert is working closely with Grocon and Colac Otway Shire.

APZ engagement program completed

After several months of activities, including a field day, eight Cluster meetings with expert advisers, an online survey and two Open House events, DELWP has completed the community engagement program to explore potential Asset Protection Zone options.

Almost 100 community members participated across all program components to provide a wide range of opinions, preferences, concerns and alternatives. Discussions included:

- A variety of options that may reduce BAL ratings from Flame Zone to BAL 40 in rebuilding areas
- Different APZ models and their differing purposes, potential benefits and inherent risks
- Amenity, biodiversity and geotechnical issues around different options
- Opportunities for community to put forward alternative vegetation management ideas.

A broad range of preferences reflected the diverse nature of the wider community and highlighted strong (and often conflicting) values and priorities. It was clear that the community shared different and varied opinions on the potential merit and effectiveness of asset protection zones and that this was influenced by what was most important to individuals both now and into the future.

As part of the next phase of the APZ Project we will:

- Develop an Engagement Report that captures what we heard from the community throughout the engagement and make this available to the community by the end of August
- Prepare a report to key decision makers summarizing the community engagement outcomes and technical analysis of options by the end of August