

November/
December
2009 - Issue 05

Mitchell Shire Bushfire Recovery Newsletter



Welcome Newsletter Information and Distribution

If you are not already on the newsletter distribution database or if you have anything to add to the newsletter, please contact:

Jacqui Sims on 0407 944 414 or via email at jacqui@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au or
Jo van Dort on 0407 952 529 or via email at jov@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Girls Weekend At Harrietville

Ladies of the Bushfire Thursday morning tea group spent a weekend of frivolity and laughter at the Feathertip Chalet at Harrietville on the weekend of 30 October – 2 November.

Harrietville was a beautiful picture of ancient deciduous trees, azaleas and other spring blossoms and the weather was perfect for leisurely walks and ice creams. We spent time shopping, sipping coffee, playing pool, cemetery touring, playing cards, did a little walking and lots and lots of talking. The main feature of the weekend was the laughter and we laughed until it hurt. It was good to escape the problems of the bushfire world.

While some shopped up a storm, others displayed their pole dancing skills, demonstrated how to cheat at pool or cards, how NOT to roll down hills, how to smoke behind trees or how to make little chairs out of champagne bottle caps.

Enough incriminating photos have been taken to embarrass certain ladies for a lifetime!

Thanks to Kevin of Mount Feathertop who generously gave a discount on the accommodation (paid for by those that attended) and to Catherine Turnbull for organising the weekend.

Another three day break is planned for mid-week in late March 2010 at the same location. Please call either Catherine Turnbull on 0400 687 771 or Heather Knight on 0418 371 147 if you are interested.



Harrietville Cemetery

L to R: Catherine Turnbull, Helen Buck, Cheryle Andersen, Heather Knight and Jo Fryer



Back: Cheryle Andersen, Judy Kirwin and Helen Buck
Front: Gloria Cordingley, Heather Knight and Catherine Turnbull

Important Contacts

Case Management Service
1800 050 400

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund
1800 180 213

Community Service Hub located at: 96 Walnut Street, Whittlesea

Phone: 9719 1000
Email:
whittlesearecovery@gmail.com

Mitchell Shire Council
5734 6200

Building Commission
1300 360 320

Victorian Bushfire
Reconstruction and Recovery
Authority
1800 240 667

Department of Primary Industries
– Broadford
5784 0600

Nurse on Call
1300 60 60 24

Department of Human Services
1300 650 172
www.dhs.vic.gov.au

CFA: www.cfa.vic.gov.au
DSE: www.dse.vic.gov.au

Mitchell Community Health
Services, Counselling and
Support
1300 773 352

Victorian Bushfire
Reconstruction and Recovery
Authority (VBRRA)
Central reception
9092 5875

Kids help line
1800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au

RSPCA for Bushfire Recovery
information or animal issues
9224 2222
www.rspcavic.org

Extension Of Rural Properties Recovery Assistance Payment

The Victorian Bushfire Appeals Panel has agreed to extend the Rural Properties Recovery Assistance payment to assist rural landowners in the bushfire affected areas who have suffered distress and hardship.

You may now be eligible for the Rural Properties Recovery Assistance Payment if you own a property that is two hectares or more in bushfire affected areas that have suffered direct physical damage or destruction. This payment was previously only available for properties of five hectares or more.

If you have already received a National Disaster Relief and Recovery Assistance (NDRRA) Clean Up and Restoration Grant or Special Circumstances Grant relating to your rural property, or the Rural Properties Recovery Assistance payment prior to the change in property size from the Rural Finance Corporation you are not eligible.

Applications need to be lodged by 31 December 2009. For conditions or more information please contact the Rural Finance Corporation for more information on www.ruralfinance.com.au or phone 1800 255 925.

Company, Trust and Partnership Changes

Recent changes to Commonwealth Laws have also amended eligibility for other assistance including damaged/destroyed principal places of residence where the property is owned by a company, trust or partnership.

More information including application forms and fact sheets for other payments are available on the Department of Human Services website for the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal

Fire Ecology Website

New website information has recently become available from the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The website provides detailed information about fire ecology and the recovery of natural values.

Visit: www.dse.vic.gov.au/fireecology



Heaters

Wignells is offering bushfire-affected families and individuals special store discounts to assist with the replacement and installation of solid fuel and wood heaters and wood stoves lost in the fires. Discounts differ based on the item being sought. Free delivery is available if the product is installed by Wignalls.

For more information, or to obtain a quote please call John Zarb on 9417 3315.

The Architects Bushfire Homes Service

The Architects Bushfire Homes Service has been established to assist people who lost their homes in the February 2009 bushfires. The service is being provided by architects who are offering their services to assist people at no cost. The service is coordinated by the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects and the Building Commission.

The service offers people access to a range of house designs and one free consultation with an architect. The house designs are tailored to be able to comply with the new Australian Standard for residential buildings in bushfire prone areas. The architectural designs also provide sustainability and amenity benefits. This service will provide one free consultation with an architect who will provide advice on the suitability of the design of the house on your property and any modifications that may be required.

People can register to participate in this offer by calling 8620 3866 or by emailing vic@raia.com.au. For more information visit <http://wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au>

Debunked! Private Bushfire Shelter Building Regulations

You may know private bushfire shelters as bushfire bunkers.

The Victorian Government is moving ahead of National Building Regulations, by bringing in new interim regulations. The new interim building regulations will assist to improve consumer information about private bushfire shelters and help eliminate products that could be unsafe.

All private bushfire shelters sold and constructed in the State of Victoria must now comply with the criteria set out in the regulations. The regulations cover areas such as fire resistance, structural stability, access and egress. You will need a building permit and may need a planning permit, check your local council.

For those who already have installed a bunker we urge you to consider its safety in light of the regulations. You may wish to contact a registered fire safety engineer for advice.

Don't rely on a shelter to save your life; it should only form part of your overall fire plan – heed the CFA's messages of Prepare, Act, Survive. Private bushfire shelters are a last resort.

For building information call 1300 360 320 or go to www.buildingcommission.com.au

For all CFA information call 1800 240 667 or go to www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Free Storage

Fort Knox is offering one month free storage to people storing goods as part of their fire plan.

For more information and locations, call 1300 668 638.





Laminex Offer

Laminex is offering a free kitchen design service to people affected by the bushfires. This is suitable for people who are rebuilding their homes and includes an initial consultation with a Laminex consultant.

During the design process Laminex will provide a computer rendered design of their new kitchen including a floor plan with dimensions, computer rendered elevations, colour, product and texture selections. People are under no obligation to use Laminex products and can take the design to any cabinet maker.

This offer can be accessed until February 2010 by contacting your VBRR Donations Coordinator or Case Manager. Once people have registered their need for the donation, they have until September 2010 to contact Laminex regarding this offer. The offer is valued at 100 points.

Archicentre Home Design Service

Archicentre, James Hardie and Wood Naturally Better are offering a free design service, normally valued at over \$2,000, to people wanting to re-build their homes after the fires. This service is available until 31 December 2009 and includes:

- A site meeting with a registered architect to establish your specific needs
- A Bushfire Attack Level ('BAL') assessment
- A review of local planning and building controls
- A concept design, including a floor plan and elevation sketches
- Recommendations on construction materials and ember resistance measures

For more information call 1300 134 513 or visit:
<http://www.archicentre.com.au/rebuild/index.htm>

Rebuilding Together – Next Steps

Work is underway to implement the projects and initiatives announced as part of the \$193 million Rebuilding Together Plan to rebuild and reconstruct towns and communities impacted by the fires.

The two-year plan sets out the rebuilding priorities identified by local communities in their Community Recovery Plans and the funds committed by the Federal and State governments, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and corporate and philanthropic donors.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has provided support for 74 of the 123 projects identified by local communities in this phase of funding and will continue to work with the Authority in assisting with funding for remaining projects.

For full details of the Rebuilding Together plan visit
www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Back To Work Tool Kits

Back to work tool kits and promotional postcards are being distributed to Community Service Hubs over the coming days. The kits contain information about state, federal and non-government services available to assist bushfire affected employees and employers to get back to work.

They also contain information on a range of issues including employment rights, benefits and entitlements, financial counselling, training entitlements and re-employment. For more information about the service call 1800 842 463.

Are You Paying Your Mortgage Plus Rent?

If you are paying your mortgage for a home that was damaged or destroyed in the bushfires, plus rent for accommodation to live in, then please contact Mitchell Community Health Services as they can assist you to put your mortgage repayments on hold.

Please call 1300 773 352 and ask to speak with a financial counsellor.



Free Legal Assistance

Free legal assistance is available Wednesday mornings at the Broadford 'Hub'. Lois from the Broadmeadows Community Legal Service will be attending.

Appointments are not required, just walk in and say hello. Other services available are the Community Rebuilding Advisory Service, DHS, CentaCare, VBRRR Donations Coordinator and Mitchell Community Health Services.

Mitchell Community Health Services Bushfire Relief Fund

This fund was established to support the immediate needs of people affected by the fires in Mitchell and Murrindindi Shires. Most of the donations have come from locals with the intention of supporting locals.

Items such as wheelbarrows, garden tools, crow bars, extension cords, trenching shovels, post hole shovels, small kitchen appliances and furniture have been purchased recently through the fund.

As people are now at varying stages in their recovery and have different requirements, we will be taking specific requests for goods.

We are able to purchase some larger tools and furniture up to a certain value.

I would encourage anyone who has lost a home or other property to contact me if you have any requirements; the only limitation is that we must buy locally. Please phone or text me with requests. I do not get mobile reception at home but a text will find me.

Please do not hesitate to call me on 0418 371 147. The fund was created by locals to support bushfire affected residents.

Heather Knight, Volunteer MCHS Bushfire Relief Fund

Portsea Camp – January 2010

The RSL has made 67 places available for bushfire-affected children at the Portsea Camp. The RSL is covering the cost of registration. The Portsea Camp will be held in early January for 6-7 days and is for nine to twelve year olds.

The Portsea Camp has been running children's school holiday camps for over 60 years. The

camps are second to none, with every effort being made to ensure your child has the best time of their lives.

For more information, please contact Annette Waugh on 9655 5536 or Returned and Services League of Australia, ANZAC House 4 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000.

David Jones and Ikea Vouchers

Demand for David Jones and Ikea vouchers has been outstripping the monthly supply of the vouchers allocated within the first week of each month.

Donations Coordinators have been working to ensure the vouchers are allocated as fairly as possible. To ensure the remaining store vouchers are equitably distributed to households across

Victoria, VBRRR will be commencing a ballot, starting this month.

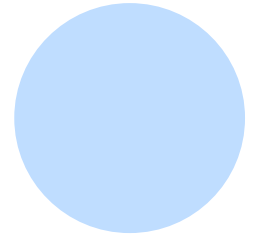
There will be another ballot drawn on 11 January 2010.

Contact your Case Manager or the VBRRR Donations Coordinator to register for the ballot. You can do this on Wednesday mornings at the Broadford 'Hub'.

'Hub' In Broadford

Just a reminder that there are support services at the Broadford Community Centre 158-162 High Street, Broadford (opposite the petrol station) from 9am – 12pm on Wednesdays. Drop by, have a coffee and say hello.

In attendance is the VBRR donations coordinator, Centrelink, Centacare, DHS, and Mitchell Community Health Services. The VBRR Mobile Building Advisory Service will also be there.



Clonbinane Family Fun Day – Feedback

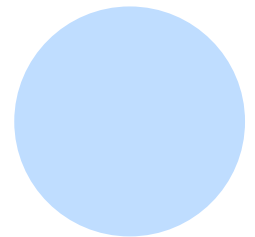
The Clonbinane Family Fun Day was a huge success with hundreds of people turning out in the heat to enjoy mini-golf, train rides, jumping castles, bbq, races, face painting and enjoying the sounds of B-Fam.

Residents also had the opportunity to put forward their ideas of different issues relating to the recovery of Clonbinane. Items that were identified included:

- Convenience store in Waterford Park
 - More street lighting
 - Increased height of bridge at Waterford Park for floods
 - Footy goal posts
 - Walking track around Ryans Road, Spur Road, Wandong-Broadford Road, Clonbinane Road
 - Football field with proper fences
 - Pool
 - Develop Neighbourhood Watch Program
 - Drinking fountain at Waterford Park Reserve
 - Creek under bridge needs a clean up
 - Things for young people to do
 - Fix cricket pitch
 - Walking/horse/bike trail off to side of road
 - Tar Turner Street
- Comments about the hall suggested it should be used for after school programs, a place for young people, hired out for parties, private functions, mum's group, toy library, clubs, sports, scouts and dog obedience.
- Two suggested locations of the hall are next to the CFA and at the Waterford Park Reserve. Suggestions for what the hall

could be like include brick construction with a kitchen, toilet, function area, storage area for toys and equipment, a gravel carpark, sewerage, a stage, and concertina doors to open/divide space.

Any comments, feedback, more ideas can be given to Cathy Soulsby on 5787 1561 or cathylew@bigpond.com or Joanne Fryer 5787 1453 or Jo McDowell 5787 2069 or Jacqui 0407 944 414.



Coping Skills

Those who are interested or know of someone who is interested in attending a Coping Skills Workshop in the Mitchell area are to contact Broadford Community Health Services Reception on 5784 5555 and register their interest.



Maximise Your Mobile Phone Coverage

Following recent upgrades to mobile phone infrastructure in bushfire affected areas, Telstra is urging residents to ensure they have an appropriate mobile phone that can take advantage of the new coverage.

Telstra has advised investment in the region only provides improved coverage on the Next G mobile network not the old GSM mobile network, and residents should be aware that different mobile phones have different capabilities. Telstra encourages residents to consider the 'Blue Tick Range' of Next G mobile phones. Blue Tick phones are recommended for rural handheld coverage and provide maximised coverage in remote areas. It is also vital that people check that their Next G mobile phone has a Next G SIM card inserted. Sometimes people insert old SIM cards into new phones, resulting in poor coverage, so it's important people ensure they have moved their phone number across to a new SIM card. Coverage performance can also be enhanced in many instances by using an external antenna.

For more information on coverage extension visit <http://www.telstra.com.au/mobile/networks/coverage/maximise.html>

Communication Black Spots

Any mobile black spots should be registered on the Telstra Website. Please use the following link to register your concerns.

<http://www.telstra.com.au/mobile/networks/feedback.cfm>

or write to:

Geoff Wall

Local Commercial Specialist

Northern Victoria

Telstra

PO Box 1111

54 High Street

Shepparton 3630



Victoria's Official Emergency Broadcasters

A new agreement for the broadcast of emergency warnings between commercial radio stations and the Victorian Government will provide Victorians with greater access to information and warnings during bushfires and other emergencies.

Under the new agreement commercial radio broadcasters will broadcast emergency warnings, as requested by emergency services, to notify commercial radio listeners of an emergency such as a bushfire in their area. This includes interrupting programming and going to continuous coverage where necessary.

This is one of the initiatives that the State Government has implemented from the Royal Commission's Interim report.

Commercial radio stations participating in this agreement include:

Fox FM 101.9	Melbourne	SEN 1116 AM	Melbourne
Triple M 105.1 FM	Melbourne	Magic 693 AM	Melbourne
Gold 104.3 FM	Melbourne	Easy Mix 1071 AM	Bendigo
Mix 101.1 FM	Melbourne	98.3 FM	Bendigo
Vega 91.5 FM	Melbourne	3BO FM 93.5 FM	Bendigo
NOVA 100.3 FM	Melbourne	Star FM 91.9 FM	Bendigo
3AW 693 AM	Melbourne	3 SR 95.3 FM	Shepparton
3MP 1377 AM	Melbourne	Sun FM 96.9 FM	Shepparton

Bird Watching And Surveying

Birds Australia is keen for people to volunteer to conduct bird surveys on their properties.

They are hoping to make post fire surveys a long term project. It would be terrific if more locals could get involved in them.

Bird surveys are fairly easy for individuals to become involved in. Watching the birds return to their favorite areas as the bush regenerates can be very satisfying.

There are already some interesting changes in the Kinglake region, and as the mass of saplings that have generated after the fire grow, it will really change the riparian habitat.

If anyone is interested in participating, please contact Stuart Dashper, Victorian Convenor of Birds Australia, at stuartqd@unimelb.edu.au

Christmas Celebration In Wallan

On Friday 11 December the Wandong Business Network and Wallan Chamber of Commerce will be holding a Christmas celebration in Wallan, next to Wellington Square Shopping Centre from 6pm to 9pm. Keep an eye out for more details in the local papers.

Plantmark Green Pass

Plantmark would like to offer those who lost their homes and gardens in the fires a GreenPass card. This card will allow access to Plantmark, Australia's largest wholesale nursery group. Residents can replant and recreate gardens at trade prices, in their own time.

Plantmark Trade Markets are large and stock over 30,000 species of plants. They have a wide range of natives, exotics, seedlings and vegetables, fruit trees, advanced trees, and gardening products such as mulch, tools, pesticides, potting mix, compost, pots, sculptures and garden furniture.

A GreenPass Card MUST be obtained BEFORE visiting a Plantmark Trade Market, as it is needed on arrival to gain entry.

GreenPass Cards are available by contacting Jane Darling at Plantmark. You will need to provide your contact details, Blue Card Referral Number and address. Contact Jane on (03) 8787 4150 or email jdarling@plantmark.com.au

Plantmark Trade Markets are in Werribee, Lynbrook and Thomastown.

DSE Re-Opens Roads And Tracks

The Department of Sustainability and Environment have opened many of the roads and tracks that have been closed since the bushfires.

Significant works are still required to re-open all tracks in all fire affected areas, particularly the removal of dangerous trees and replacement of bridges and river crossings.

For more information visit Parks Victoria website on www.parkweb.vic.gov.au and follow the links on the Home page to Activities, and Road/Track closures in the 'More Information' box. Or call Parks Victoria on 13 1963.



Donated Rugs

On 16 October, fire affected ladies from the local district gathered at the Salvation Army in Broadford. The ladies had received knitted rugs knitted by Better Homes and Gardens readers and distributed via the Salvation Army.

Melinda Hobson of Upper Plenty wrote to the magazine to thank them for her rug and the magazine kindly declined to wear her bikini on this occasion (pheww!).

The rugs have been a great hit and are very much appreciated by all who have received them.



Books Books Books!

Books are available to replace those lost in the fires.

If you have a blue DHS card, take it along to the Kilmore Library to choose from a range of donated new and second-hand books.

Contact the Kilmore Library for more information and to check that books are still available on 5782 1322.

Santa Is Visiting Whittlesea

Having filled generations of Sydney children with Christmas spirit, The Santa Sleigh of Berowra is heading south.

Santa will fly his sleigh down to Whittlesea on December 19, from 4pm.

Santa's Plan

- Santa and his elves arrive in their sleigh
- Santa and his elves give out treats and talk with children and their families
- Mrs Claus will take Santa photos for families/groups
- A Santa sing-a-long will get the crowd excited
- A BBQ and drinks will be provided for all.

RSVPs are requested to ensure that Santa brings enough gifts for all children attending. Please contact Andrew Follow, Apex Santa Coordinator – Victoria on 0400 962 795 or andrew_follows@iprimus.com.au



Bibles

If anyone would like a Bible to replace those lost in the fires, the Kilmore Anglican Church is providing replacement Bibles. Please contact Catherine on 0400 687 771.

ACPET Scholarships

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) is offering a limited number of scholarships for training in a variety of skills and vocations for bushfire-affected people. Fields of study available include multi-media, entertainment, information technology, counselling and psychotherapy, business, hospitality, retail, hairdressing, fitness, bricklaying, health care and first aid. Scholarships have been donated by a range of training providers to assist those recovering from the Victorian bushfires.

Successful applicants will have access to accredited training and qualifications offering new and rewarding career opportunities.

More information is available on www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au or call Martin Broadhurst on 0408 881 917 or email matin.broadhurst@acpet.edu.au

Study Scholarships

Do you have a training need or require additional support to achieve your training goals as a result of being impacted by the February 2009 Victorian Bushfires? The Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, Jacinta Allan, MP, has announced 250 Bushfire Scholarships valued at up to \$500 per scholarship.

Who Is Eligible?

These scholarships are for people who have been disadvantaged by the bushfires and want to access and complete training or would like to retrain to get employment in a new occupation area as a result of the bushfires.

Need More Information?

For more information about the Victorian Government Bushfire Scholarship programs or to register your interest, please call Skills Victoria on 131 823 or email skills@diird.vic.gov.au

Anglicare Female Scholarships 2010

Anglicare Victoria invites applications for one-off funding to help meet the education expenses of girls and young women in the Hume Region (Mitchell is part of the Hume Region) who wish to continue their study and have been impacted by the drought and/or fires.

For more information contact Suzanne Don Leonard (Community Development Manager) Anglicare Victoria (Hume Region) 5721 9088. The closing date for applications is 11 December 2009.

School, Kinder and Child Care Closures

Parents are encouraged to check the Victorian Education website on high fire risk days to check for changes to school bus routes and to see if their school, kinder or childcare centre will be closed. More information is available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/closure/default.htm> or contact your school.

ABC Documentary

The ABC is making a commemorative film, documenting what happened on Black Saturday. This will be a historical document for all Australians. The documentary will be in remembrance of those people who lost their lives in Australia's worst peace-time disaster.

As part of the documentary, a commemorative photo-memorial of individuals who passed away in the fires is being prepared.

If you lost family members or friends on Black Saturday and would like them to be remembered in this memorial, we welcome you to provide a photo.

If you would like to contribute, or would like to know more about the film, please don't hesitate to contact Miriam Kenter on 8060 7212 or email Miriam@renegade.com.au

Supported by:

