

February 2010
Issue 06

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 jacquis@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au or Jo van Dort on 0407 952 529 or via email at jov@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Common Threads Quilts By Heather Knight

Since early this year many families have been the recipients of beautifully made quilts made by a group of quilters in Perth known as "Common Threads". Forty-two quilts have been lovingly made for specific people in this area. The postage for the quilts (registered mail from WA) was also paid for by donations. The quilts have been delivered personally to families in the Wandong, Clonbinane and Upper Plenty areas.

The Common Threads ladies have taken a personal interest in the lives of those who receive their quilts and feel as though they share a bond with them. There has been no greater gift of love than these beautifully designed and made quilts, which take into account favourite colours, interests and aspects of the recipient's life.

One of the latest to receive a quilt is our much loved and hard working Jacqui Sims. Always working for others but having her own struggles (hard work pushing tanks up hills isn't it Jacqui?) her quilt is a dream in red, gold and mauve.

Jacqui, Alison Holmberg, Natalie and Tony Laurie and Tiffany Lamb were presented with their quilts at the Christmas luncheon on Thursday 17 December.

Heather Knight



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: 03 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 606 024

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
Service, 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

Mitchell Community Health Service – Fire Danger Days

Please note the following important information about our service provision during the fire season:

On declared Code Red fire danger days, all client services will be cancelled. The Seymour, Wallan, Kinglake, Flowerdale and Marysville sites will be closed (this includes the Kinglake Ranges Health Centre). Alternative service arrangements will be made prior to the day for clients who rely on essential services.

On declared Extreme fire danger days, only essential services, centre or town based services will operate.

For more information, contact MCHS on 1300 773 352, fax 5784 5525, Broadford Reception on 5784 5555 or via email serviceaccess@mitchellchs.org.au

Telstra Tips for Natural Disasters

Telstra has prepared some important tips to help ready residents for the upcoming bushfire season. The tips have been developed in response to customer enquires about ways to optimise their telephone services during natural disasters, such as bushfires or floods.

1. Think about a Blue Tick mobile phone that has enhanced coverage for country areas.
2. Upgrade your 2G SIM card when purchasing a Next G™ mobile handset to receive the benefits of Telstra's 3G network coverage. Customers can keep their number and it's a free service unless a new plan or handset is required.
3. Have a spare, fully charged mobile battery on stand-by.
4. Carry additional in-car charger and AC mains charger in case of evacuation.
5. Consider a standard fixed phone; power failures will affect cordless phones and VoIP services.
6. Keep a list of essential numbers.
7. Only call Triple Zero (000) in life threatening emergencies.
8. Keep all calls to a minimum during natural disasters to reduce congestion and allow people to call emergency service organisations.
9. If living or travelling in isolated areas, consider purchasing a satellite phone for continuous phone coverage.
10. Consider a Yagi antennae to maximise mobile phone reception from your home or vehicle.



Christmas Lunch

Thanks to the generosity of Pathways (Salvation Army, Seymour), the Thursday morning tea group, was able to enjoy a delightful Christmas Luncheon at the Royal Oak Hotel on Thursday 17 December. The food and service was excellent, and the company, as always, very enjoyable. Thirty-three adults and nine children attended the lunch.

Many, many thanks to Jodie Harris and Pathways for making the Christmas Lunch possible. For this group you have made this Christmas one to remember for all the right reasons.

Heather Knight

Tai Chi

Tai Chi classes have started again on Monday 8 February at LB Davern Reserve, Wandong on from 7pm – 8pm with qualified teacher – Vicki Katte. Tai Chi offerers:

- Relaxation and distress exercises
- Fitness, agility and dexterity training
- Self defence applications
- Therapeutic breathing exercises
- Strengthen internal organs, health and vitality
- Meditative
- Sociable and fun
- First session FREE – give it a go!
- Pensioner concession rates apply and ½ price for bushfire affected families with blue card/form
- \$10 per session or 10% discount for term payment upfront
- Kids welcome

Contact Vicki Katte, 5782 1765 or email vickikatte@hotmail.com Official website: <http://www.chenpanling.com>

Tertiary and Vocational Scholarships Program

The VBAF is providing tertiary and vocational scholarships for students affected by the 2009 bushfires and whose families continue to experience financial hardship as a result of the fires or will study bushfire-related courses. The scholarships are valued at \$15,000 per year for the duration of the course.

For further information contact the Fund Information Line 1800 180 213.

Skills Victoria Scholarships

The Victorian Government, through Skills Victoria, is offering scholarships for people who have been disadvantaged as a result of the bushfires to assist them with their training related costs.

Assistance Available: There are 250 scholarships valued up to \$500 per scholarship. Available for training costs associated with undertaking any nationally recognised Certificate, Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualification offered at a Registered Training Organisation in Victoria. Payable on evidence of enrolment.

Eligibility: You must have proof of enrolment in a nationally recognised qualification on or after Sunday 1 March 2009 and you (or your household) hold a Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) Blue Referral Card or Department of Human Services (DHS) Blue Referral Card.

Consideration of special circumstances will also allow other bushfire affected individuals to apply. Scholarships will be available until June 2011 or until the allocation is exhausted.

Bushfire Scholarships Team at Skills Victoria (03) 9637 2635.

www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au/financial-a-personal-support.html



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 etc, 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 take specific requests for goods required. We are able to purchase some larger tools and furniture etc. up to a value of \$500.

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 call Heather Knight, Volunteer MCHS Bushfire Relief Fund on 0418 371 147. This fund was established by local people to support you.

Online Resources For Kids , 2010

Kids Helpline has recently developed a number of pages on its website to assist young people and families impacted by the bushfires. Age appropriate information has been developed on each of the three micro sites for kids, teenagers and adults, including:

- Tip Sheets – on grief and loss, depression and resilience
- Helpful Resources – links to useful resources on other websites, such as tips sheets and fact sheets
- Service for Victorians – a database to locate relevant services in Victoria
- Victorian Bushfire Links – links to helpful websites on issues such as money, legal issues, housing, community news and events, sports and recreation, emotional support and animal care

Visit www.kidshelpline.com.au

Beyond Blue Information Cards

Beyond Blue has produced information cards with tips, information and links to services for people who have experienced a disaster, as well as their friends and family.

This resource was developed in association with the Australian Centre for Post-traumatic Mental Health, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, the Australian Red Cross and, importantly, in consultation with people affected by previous bushfires.

For a copy please visit the Beyond Blue website at www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=59.1201

Needs Based Donations

The Needs Based Donations Management System is set to close in February 2010. Bushfire affected households that haven't used all of their 1000 points to access larger donations are encouraged to do so as soon as possible, with the point system due to close at the end of February 2010.

SUCCESSION by Dr Graeme Lorimer, Biosphere, 22/12/2009

When ground is laid bare by fire, flood or other means, nature's way of recovering is by a process called 'succession'.

After the February bushfires, the first signs of recovery in the bush were mats of fungus and the sprouting of surviving plants such as grass-trees, eucalypts, lilies, mat-rushes and Weeping Grass. You might not have realised the massive fungal activity that has been going on, but you may have found yourself sliding on ground that looked dry but was oily just under the surface. I suspect that fungal activity creates that oily layer, binding soil particles together and helping the soil regain absorbency. You might also have noticed orange or white crusts of fungal growth on the soil.

The vast majority of greenery that appeared initially was due to the sprouting of plants that survived the bushfire, such as the coppice growth of eucalypts and the leaves on grass-trees. Then in autumn, moss germinated from spores, eventually creating the brilliant lime green hillsides seen in spring, maturing to orange in November. Most of the moss is of one species (*Funaria hygrometrica*) which appears on burned ground worldwide, before disappearing a few years later.

As the soil became more consistently moist through winter and spring, increasing numbers of plants germinated from seed – particularly eucalypts, wattles, peas and what ecologists call 'opportunists' or 'pioneering' species. The opportunists are quick to germinate, reach maturity and produce lots of seeds, taking advantage of the lack of competition from other plants. While they are abundant soon after a fire, they dwindle over a few years as they become out-competed by slower-developing species. Animals go through a similar process.

Some of the most conspicuous opportunist species are in the geranium, daisy, pea and stonecrop families.

As an example, you may have seen in the bush lots of the indigenous wildflowers, Austral Stork's-bill (*Pelargonium australe*) and Kopata (*Pelargonium inodorum*), which many people presumed must be weeds because they have been so prolific. Their heart-shaped leaves have crinkly edges, and the species produce copious small, pink flowers from November to early in the year. They've germinated by the million, from seeds produced shortly after the previous bushfire (yes, many decades ago), and you'll probably only see them over the next eighteen months, until the next fire.

Various orchid species such as the Hare Orchid have appeared for the first time since the previous fires. I think that the drought has been so severe this year that the mass flowering that normally occurs in the spring following a fire may be staggered between this year and next.

The display of grass-tree flowers in October to November has been the best I have ever seen anywhere. The Austral Grass-tree's stems have been flowering to a height of 4½ metres *en masse*, while the Small Grass-trees have well over 100 flower stems per plant in some cases. Daisies and wildflowers in the pea family should flower very well next year. Different species will dominate, year by year, as succession takes its course.

Some weeds are opportunists; e.g. thistles, fleabanes and cape weed. These may be prolific over the coming year but most will soon return to pre-fire densities. The trick is to know which weeds are in this category and which ones you should put more effort into preventing from setting seed. Sweet Pittosporum is a good species to control now and blackberry will be a priority over summer.

Birds are going through succession just as plants are. Initially there were carrion-eaters and parrots that eat eucalypt seeds, but since winter there has been a steady build-up of insect-eating birds as their food source has grown. Many people are seeing an abundance of some bird species they've never lived with before, such as Rufous Songlarks that have moved into forests from their normal pastoral habitat, and mixed flocks of Masked Woodswallows and White-browed Woodswallows. Most bird species are well into recovery now, such as lyrebirds, wrens, pardalotes, fantails and king parrots.

The bush grows up and goes through stages just as children do, and like raising kids, it's easy to find yourself regretting not paying enough attention until it's too late. Why not choose a familiar location in the burned landscape that you can photograph year by year? That way, you can capture the process of succession and have reminders of the wildflowers that are only seen after fire. If you're like me, it will also inspire hope and restore faith in nature.

Sunday Creek Post Fire Weed Control

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) has been allocated Federal funding through Caring For Our Country to support post fire weed control along waterways in the catchment. The GBCMA plans to use this funding to make the most of the opportunity to control re-emerging weeds on waterways burnt in the February fires.

The GBCMA will employ approved contractors to spray or stem inject priority weeds along all major waterways burnt in February 2009 while infestations are manageable. The species targeted will mainly be woody weeds, including but not limited to, blackberry, gorse, broom and willow.

Work is expected to begin on the Sunday Creek in the week commencing 7 December. Landholders adjoining the Sunday Creek have been sent notification of the proposed weed control and are asked to contact GBCMA staff in the Yea office on 5736 0100 to discuss any issues with access of works proposed.

Support to undertake wood weed control is also available through DPI for freehold land. To register your interest for assistance with weed management on private land, call DPI on 5784 0600.

Landholders along burnt waterways may also be eligible for funding assistance of \$8 per metre for waterway fencing. Interested landholders are encouraged to contact the GBCMA to obtain waterway grant assistance or further information. Normal grants still apply for landholders along unburnt waterways.

GBCMA assistance with weed control and the increased subsidy support for fencing is expected to be available for two years, pending 2010/2011 Fire Recovery funding.

Sustainable Rebuilding Ideas

Comprehensive advice is now available to assist people rebuilding after the February bushfires.

Information sheets have been designed to provide cost effective and simple ideas that make new homes more comfortable to live in, cheaper to run and with a lighter footprint on the environment.

Information has been designed to make people aware of the opportunities to improve their house designs and make it easier for them, to talk with their builders and designers about the features they want.

The materials are readily accessible from Sustainability Victoria or from Community Service Hubs and VBRRR rebuilding advisors and from www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/sustainablebuildingideas

For more information please ask your VBRRR Rebuilding Advisor or Hub Captain for more information about support available or call Sustainability Victoria on 1300 262 744.

Caravan For Offer

Older style caravan available for free!

There is a set of single bunk beds at the rear and also one single bed. The front table can be put down as another bed if needed.

It has a gas fridge and stove, although not certain if they both still work as they haven't been used for many years.

There is a small cupboard for hanging space, and small storage cupboards at the front and back of the van.

Pick up is required from Seymour. Caravan is still currently registered.

For more information, contact Jacqui Sims on 0407 944 414.

