



NEWSLETTER September 2010

Project Updates

Yinnar Town Entrance

Pine trees have been removed and mulched in preparation for the new garden beds that will mark the town entrance. Plans are being finalised including the specific species for planting. Local primary school students assisted in a tree planting morning in early August when thirty-two native trees were planted, staked and mulched to provide a habitat for native birds and a scenic aspect to the entrance. The project has been undertaken in partnership with the Yinnar and District Lions Club, Latrobe City Council and Yinnar and District Association and is funded by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund.

Natural Values Recovery Program

The Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria are administering the Natural Values Recovery Program on public land affected by the bushfires. The program, worth \$4.8 million, was announced in October 2009 by the Victorian and Commonwealth Government as part of the *Rebuilding Together – Statewide Recovery Plan*.

The project aims to help fire affected plants, animals and ecological communities recover. Species covered by these programs include Leadbeater's Possum, Barred Galaxias (a small endangered native fish), frogs, crayfish and owls.

These projects are being conducted at Wilsons Promontory, Bunyip, Traralgon, Dargo, Beechworth, Bendigo and Kilmore-Murrindindi. Work has started on some projects with the bulk to be done through this coming spring and summer.

For more information see www.dse.vic.gov.au – Bushfire recovery – Current recovery programs

News Updates

New VBRRRA Chair

Following the recent stepping down of Christine Nixon as Chair of VBRRRA to take on a voluntary rebuilding advisor role, a new Chair of VBRRRA has been appointed. The new Chair is Ian Dicker who will be in the role until the middle of 2011. He has advised he will be donating his salary to a charity – most likely a bushfire project or community program.





Mr Dicker and staff visited Traralgon South and District on Tuesday 24 August. He visited the Callignee Hall construction site and had lunch with members of the Community Recovery Committee.

Royal Commission Report Released

The final report of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission was released on Saturday 31 July 2010, containing 67 recommendations. The Victorian Government accepted 59 of these recommendations in-principle and conducted a short-term, targeted consultation with key agencies, communities and interested stakeholders seeking their views on the recommendations, focussing on the 8 not yet endorsed by government. Following the series of consultations, the Victorian Government has accepted in full or in part 66 of the 67 recommendations.

To view a copy of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission report online go to www.royalcommision.vic.gov.au

VBRRRA 18 Month Report

VBRRRA has released its 18 Month Report, detailing progress on reconstruction and recovery activities.

Figures contained in the report include:

- More than 2000 building permits have been issued for houses, sheds and commercial buildings
- More than 500 community projects have been funded or supported
- 90% of all damaged or destroyed fencing (over 7800 km) has been repaired
- The case management service has provided support to more than 5500 individuals and families since the fires
- More than 1800 people have taken up the offer of free counselling vouchers
- More than 560 businesses have been assisted by the Small Business Mentoring Service
- More than 4500 hectares of forest have been reseeded

The full report can be viewed at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au – Publications or call 1800 240 667 to be sent a copy.

New Contacts Guide Now Available

VBRRRA has updated its Useful Contacts Guide for people who were affected by the bushfire. The guide contains a range of contact information including personal and counselling assistance, Community Service Hub listings, material aid shopfronts, government departments and agencies, business assistance contacts and Community Recovery Committees.

To view the guide visit www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au and follow the links Publications/VBRRRA Useful Contacts Booklet – August 2010.





Guide to Ecological Recovery After Fire

A new guide titled *Fire – Ecological Recovery, an Overview* has been produced by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The guide considers what happens to plants, animals and ecosystems after fire, and also identifies the key concerns for natural values recovery.

The guide is being distributed to key stakeholders including communities in fire-affected areas, and can also be downloaded electronically at www.dse.vic.gov.au

Household Rebates, Grants, Incentives & Advice

Mobile Rebuilding Advisory Service

Information, advice and assistance on all aspects of rebuilding is available via a free mobile Rebuilding Advisory Service operating in all bushfire affected areas. The service visits affected communities to provide face-to-face assistance to anyone rebuilding their home or business.

Advice is now available from rebuilding advisors on cost effective and simple ideas that make new homes more comfortable to live in, cheaper to run and with a lighter environmental footprint.

To access this free mobile Rebuilding Advisory Service or to make an appointment for face-to-face assistance, please contact VBRR Building Advisor Ralph Dawson on mobile 0400 661 360.

Important Information for Planning and Rebuilding

1. Planning – The State Government has streamlined the process for rebuilding homes destroyed by bushfire. In most cases you no longer need a planning permit if you rebuild on the same site, and just need to submit a site plan which can be approved pretty quickly. There are some exceptions, such as areas covered by heritage, landslip, or flooding overlays. You should check with Latrobe City Council if any of these apply. If you do need a planning permit, fees are being waived in most circumstances.

2. Bushfire Attack Level - A BAL is the Bushfire Attack Level and is part of new Australian building standards which now apply to all new homes in Victoria, not just those destroyed by the February bushfires. It covers all new buildings, alterations and additions in Victoria, from homes on the fringes of the metropolitan area to those adjacent to our state forests, to communities devastated by the February 2009 fires. It is an assessment of your property's fire risk, and the building standards it must now meet. Property owners can assess their own BAL under the new building standards using a simplified six-step approach. The approach is contained in '*A guide to building in Victoria after the bushfires*', which is available at your local Council or via the website: www.buildingcommission.com.au. You can also contact the Bushfire Building Advice Line on 1300 360 320.

By following the six steps in the guide you should be able to determine your building site's BAL. However you will still need to satisfy the relevant building surveyor that the BAL is correct. The guide is an indication only. If the BAL is accurate then the appropriate construction methods will need to be incorporated in the design documents and specifications that you submit to your relevant building surveyor for a building permit.





3. **Building Permit** – A building permit is required to rebuild your home. Your builder will help guide you through this process, including seeking the permit from Latrobe City Council or an independent building surveyor.

The State Government cut red tape to allow people to build something temporary on their block so they could return to their property quickly and safely. For those still living in temporary accommodation the State Government has extended the time you can live there to March 2012.

Important Dates for Planning and Rebuilding

The following requirements with regards to houses that were damaged or destroyed by a bushfire that occurred between 1 January 2009 and 31 March 2009 must be fulfilled or completed by the dates indicated.

31 March 2011	Recovery Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The construction of a building or the construction or carrying out of works must be completed prior to this date. • Native vegetation must not be removed, destroyed or lopped after this date. • Any sign displayed must be removed by this date.
31 March 2012	Temporary Accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buildings must not be used after this date unless in accordance with the requirements of planning scheme 52.38 2009 Bushfire Recovery
31 April 2012	Rebuilding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site plan must be submitted to the responsible authority by this date. • The development has to commence within two years after the approval of a site plan • The development must be completed within two years after the development commences • A time extension request of the owner/occupier of the land may be lodged with the relevant authority before the expiry of the applicable period or within three months of the expiry period.

Further information is available from Latrobe City Council or visit www.dpcd.vic.gov.au and follow the links Planning>Planning schemes>Planning schemes and maps online>Planning Schemes Online>Latrobe>50 particular provisions (drop box), then select 52 38 2009 Bushfire Recovery or 52 39 2009 Bushfire – Replacement Buildings.

Survey – People Living in Temporary Accommodation

Many areas of Latrobe City were severely impacted by the 2009 Bushfires. This level of impact resulted in many people losing their homes and resulted in people having to relocate to another property or rebuild a shed for temporary accommodation on their land.





A 'Post Bushfire Housing Survey Evaluating Home Rebuilding Capacity' is currently being formulated and will be issued in the near future. The aim of this survey is to help identify the issues that prevent bushfire affected homeowners from rebuilding their home and to connect those in need of additional housing assistance to relevant help services.

Affordable Demonstration Homes for Bushfire Affected Communities

Two teams of registered Victorian builders and architects have developed home designs for bushfire affected people at a set price of \$150,000. They have been developed as part of a competition where Victorian builders and architects were invited to submit tenders for the design and construction of three-bedroom homes that were six-star energy rated and BAL 40 bushfire compliant. Until May 2011, people from bushfire affected communities who are considering rebuilding can access the three-bedroom designs at the set price. The cost excludes consultancy fees and external costs. The designs can be viewed at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au by following the links: Reconstruction/Affordable Demonstration Homes

Bushfire Counselling Sessions

A reminder to people affected by the February 2009 bushfires to make the most of the free Psychological Counselling Voucher Program. The program will run until 10 August 2011, and vouchers can be used anytime during this period. People will not have to make any co-payment to the counsellor.

The program has been developed through a \$3.5 million gift from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund to assist people directly by the 2009 Victorian bushfires to access additional psychological counseling support. Six counseling vouchers are available for each person, including for dependant children over five years of age. Vouchers can be used to see an eligible counselor of your choice.

For further information call 1800 180 213 or visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal

Sustainability Victoria Fact Sheets

Sustainability Victoria has produced a series of fact sheets designed to help bushfire victims rebuild their homes more sustainably. The fact sheets provide valuable information on building houses that are more comfortable year round and cheaper to run. The fact sheets are available online at www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/sustainablebuildingareas

If you need any assistance or for further information call 1300 363 744.





Case Management Service Still Available

Over the past 15 months, the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service has helped more than 5500 people get back on track, and the Case Management Service is still available to help bushfire affected people.

People can ring the Case Management Telephone Service on 1800 050 400, which is staffed by experienced Case Managers. Staff talk to callers to learn about the issues with which they require assistance, and also different services that are available to help people decide their next move.

The Case Management Service is available to all bushfire affected people. Past clients often get in touch when things change, and some people are only now asking for support for the first time.

Events, Activities & Programs

Boolarra Winter Vocal Nosh

The next Community Acapella Soul Singing session is scheduled for 2 October 2010, from 4.30 pm to 7.00 pm in the Cooperating Church building, Tarwin Street, Boolarra. This is a free activity but you are asked to bring a plate of nosh to share.

If you are interested in this community singing adventure, please contact Rose La Vie on 5169 6707 or email raindancer777@hotmail.com

Boolarra Women Walking

Come along and join the Boolarra Women Walking group on the first and third Tuesdays of each month until September. The next walk along the Rail Trail is scheduled for Tuesday 21 September 2010. Meet at 10 am at the Cooperating Church, Tarwin Street, Boolarra and bring your own refreshments. Lunch will be after the walk at the Cooperating Church Hall at 12 noon. Children are welcome. Contact Pam on 5169 6597 or Rose on 5169 6707.

Bushfire Mentoring Program

Berry Street is currently seeking volunteers to mentor young people affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires for a new program aimed at encouraging youth participation in the community as part of bushfire recovery. Mentors will be provided free training.



Through the Bushfire Mentoring Program, volunteer mentors will be matched with a young person from the community to provide them with advice, support and encouragement as they participate in a range of activities designed to build their resilience, explore their talents and set goals for the future.

To find out more about the program or to express an interest in becoming a mentor, please contact Marina Savron or Larissa Walker on 5134 5871, or email lwalker@berrystreet.org.au





Singing is Fun

You are invited to a healing, fun and skill building exercise for bushfire affected residents of Gippsland. This program is different, fun, leading edge and practical, served with large doses of energy and passion.

Session dates for the remainder of 2010 are: Sunday 3 October, Sunday 21 November and Sunday 12 December. Each session will commence at 1pm, be of approximately hours duration and held at the Latrobe Convention Centre in Traralgon.

Please call Latrobe City Bushfire Recovery to register - 5128 5771



This program is funded by the generous support of Soroptimist International.

Skills and Confidence for Tackling Tough Times Workshop

This is a Community Support Training Project conducted by *beyond blue* for bushfire affected communities. All community members welcome.

Increase your understanding of...

- Typical responses to a traumatic event like the Victorian Bushfires
- Tips and tools for helping yourself, your family and friends
- Common mental health issues following a traumatic event like the Victorian Bushfires
- How mental health professionals help



This workshop will be run by Cath Walker, expert *beyondblue* facilitator, with plenty of time to raise questions and discuss local issues.

When: Thursday 28 October 2010
Time: 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm – 3 hours
Where: Boolarra Memorial Hall, Christian Street, Boolarra

Finger food will be provided. Please advise of any specific dietary or accessibility requirements when registering.

To register for the workshop: Contact Latrobe City Bushfire Recovery 5128 5771

This Project is funded by the **Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing** and endorsed by :

