

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

15 MARCH 2016

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



Clean-Up Continues

Six properties were cleaned up last week during the first week of the physical clean-up.

There are four clean-up crews currently working in both Wye River and Separation Creek; along Iluka Avenue, Dunoon Road, Karingal Drive and Mitchell Grove.

For residents who have opted out of the clean-up, a new fact sheet is available from the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre.

There are a number of significant hazards likely to have been created on a bushfire affected property. These include:

- Asbestos containing materials – either solid material or asbestos dust
- Gas cylinders (eg LPG gas cylinders)
- Chemicals (drums and containers which have survived the fire)
- Burnt CCA – copper, chrome, arsenic from treated timber and ash

Property owners who plan to clean up debris on their own property are required to comply with legislative

requirements under both Environment Protection and Occupational Health and Safety Legislation.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2007) detail a number of prohibited activities involving asbestos containing materials. These prohibited activities do apply to homeowners and include the supply, storage, transport, sale, use and re-use of asbestos. Failure to comply with these regulations is considered an offence.

Wye River and Separation Creek property owners are also required to follow direction from Colac Otway Shire, and those individuals electing to clean-up their property themselves will be issued with a Building Order by the Shire (or Emergency Building Order if a building structure needs to be demolished as part of the clean-up).

These are legal documents issued under the Building Act (1993), and will specify requirements on the property owner for the clean-up of the property as well stipulating a completion date.

Given the significant hazards on bushfire affected properties, and desire to minimise the cost to land owners, the Victorian Government has encouraged owners to participate in the Grocon clean-up process.

This is the preferred outcome given that Grocon will co-ordinate all activities required to safely remove bushfire debris and related hazards, at a capped cost of up to \$25,000 for insured properties.

Fire affected residents are still able to participate in the Grocon clean-up and are encouraged to register their interest as soon as possible. This can be done by contacting the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre on 5232 9400 and selecting 1.

WyeSep Connect

Do you have news you would like to share or an event coming up? Maybe some questions that need an answer?

All the latest information about the resettlement of the Wye River and Separation Creek communities is available at www.WyeSepConnect.info

Residents and invited to contribute by e-mailing contactus@wyeseconnect.info

For more information and to get the latest news, visit www.wyeseconnect.info, and also join our Facebook community at www.facebook.com/WyeSepConnect.

From the Mayor

I was down in Wye River and Separation Creek last week and was able to have a first-hand look at the great work underway by Grocon and their clean-up teams.

I was aware that the clean-up was going to be a very complex project, requiring a great deal of planning and precision, however the enormity of the task really hit home when I was on site.

As you are all well aware, the terrain, particularly in Wye River, is extremely steep and the roads are narrow, with some tight bends.

The task of getting machinery and equipment in place was a challenging one, however, all the hard planning work has been done and the physical work is well and truly underway.

The change to the landscape will also bring with a range of emotions.

For some, it will highlight new beginnings, for others, it will remind them of how things were and the fact that there are changes happening.

It is incredible to see how quickly the natural environment is starting to heal with new leaves sprouting on the eucalypts. New life, new beginnings.

I continue to encourage everyone to make sure they are taking care of themselves and accessing services that are available to you.

There have been sessions on offer with Dr David Younger in Wye River, and we will continue to advise of these as they are scheduled.

- **Frank Buchanan**

From the Emergency Management Commissioner

It has been fantastic to see clean-up crews on the ground this past week.

As of Friday 11 March six properties were cleaned and are now pending an environmental certificate, as well as restoring roads and access for trucks and machinery.

The Grocon crews will continue to work over the next few months, with areas considered a public risk being cleared first.

I encourage everyone to check out WyeSep Connect website and Facebook for updates on the clean-up.

These sites are designed to be the key source for community members to source and share information and stories. We encourage feedback and input to ensure it meets your needs. Community members are encouraged to send in images, article ideas, Facebook posts or improvement suggestions.

Recently the website was updated to include information about Flora & Fauna, including information on weed management and some projects from the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning needing your ideas.

The website will continue to expand as resettlement progresses. Up next is the section on Infrastructure.

Since the WyeSep Connect website and Facebook was launched we have received a number of enquiries, which is fantastic to see. Community members with questions relating to their specific circumstances are encouraged to contact the Colac Otway Shire Bushfire Information Centre or book into a One-Stop-Shop.

The commencement of the clean-up of properties and roads is a positive step forward. The journey through resettlement of Wye River and Separation Creek will be long, and at times challenging, so it is up to us to stick together and work through them.

Craig Lapsley

Community Resilience Committee

The Community Resilience Committee will be participating in the CFA Easter Fete, hosting a table and providing an opportunity for residents to meet members of the committee.

Residents are invited to share their ideas and priorities for the longer term project of the reconnection and resettlement of the Wye River and Separation Creek communities.

Water Tank Cleaning and Refilling

With the removal of most of the fence in Separation Creek, some residents are now able to return to their properties for the first time and subsequently need access to clean water.

To ensure these residents have potable water, the roof cleaning and tank filling service will continue and residents who haven't registered must do so by 18th March.

This is not a new service. It is part of the relief effort and has been in place since residents were able to return to their homes.

This service empties water tanks of contaminated water, cleans the roof and water tank and refills the water tank with 5000L of water.

Contractors are on track to complete all currently requested works before Easter.

Fire affected residents who currently do not have access to their properties or whose properties are behind the fence can still register for this service. The cleaning and filling service will be completed at these properties when it is safe to do so.

To request this service or to discuss conducting a risk assessment of your water, please contact the Bushfire Recovery Team on 5232 9400 and press 1 when prompted.

Septic Systems Updates

Will permit fees for septic applications be waived for bushfire affected properties?

Yes, a fee waiver for septic applications will apply in line with the Planning Permit fee waiver.

Does a secondary treatment plant have to be installed?

No. It is not mandatory that a secondary treatment plant be installed, however, due to the challenges of retaining effluent onsite at Wye River/Separation Creek, a treatment plant is often selected as the most suitable option.

Is a settlement wide system being considered/installed?

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the EPA are assessing solutions to managing septic waste, which may include cluster or neighbourhood solutions. It is anticipated that this assessment will be finished before the Grocon clean-up is completed. Colac Otway Shire suggests residents delay Land Capability Assessments and applications to install septic systems until this assessment is completed.

Will Grocon assess septic systems before they are removed from a fire affected property?

Colac Otway Shire conducted an initial assessment of septic systems, based on a visual assessment only and not a definitive assessment. Where damage is likely to have occurred but could not be verified (eg distribution lines underground), it is assumed they are damaged. Contact Colac Otway Shire if you have not been advised of the outcome of this initial assessment. If you are unsure, engage a licensed plumber or contact the manufacturer.

Will Grocon be removing septic systems from damaged properties?

Yes, however this needs to be agreed as part of the signed scope. Property owners who have opted in to the Grocon clean-up can request to have their septic system removed as part of the clean-up of their property.

I have been advised I cannot re-build my house with the same septic system I had previously even though I never had a problem with it.

All new developments must have septic systems that comply with current regulations, which were updated in 2013. Properties with a current Planning Permit will be able to re-build the same dwelling with the same septic system. All other property owners will be required to submit a septic system application as part of their overall Planning application.

I have been told I cannot rebuild my house with the old septic system. It is impossible for me to re-build the same home due to cost/lack of space.

All new developments must have septic systems that comply with current regulations, which were updated in 2013. If your septic system is unsuitable a new dwelling design may be appropriate. DELWP and EPA are assessing a range of options for septic systems that will assist property owners in this situation. The outcome of this work will not be known until the end of March, 2016.

You can discuss the implications of they apply to your property with the specialist staff the One Stop Shop. Please contact the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre to make an appointment by phoning 2532 9400 and selecting 1.

I have a septic system, but I do not know how to ensure it is in good running order.

Contact a licensed plumber to assess and/or conduct maintenance. You can also contact Colac Otway Shire for information on how to maintain your septic system.

Community Firewood

A number of trees that were declared dangerous and felled as part of the Clean-up process are being made available for fire affected residents to cut up and use as firewood.

The felled trees, which have been examined for asbestos and other toxins, are safe to touch, cut up and use as firewood by fire affected residents.

The Community Fire Wood trees will be located on the Shire land at the end of Sarsfield Street, near the end of Stanway Drive. Wye River and Separation Creek residents are welcome to cut up what they need and take it home. Some tree mulch is also available for residents to take for their gardens.

Residents are advised to use well maintained equipment and protective clothing including gloves and eye and ear protection. Cutting up and transporting the wood is to be done at the residents own risk.

Personal Support

A community session with Dr David Younger was held in Wye River on Saturday 12th March.

Dr David Younger is a Consultant Psychologist who has extensive experience in providing support and assistance to communities, individuals, and families affected by such events as the 2009 Victorian and 2013 Tasmanian bushfires, as well as the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire.

A number of group sessions will be held in coming months with Dr Rob Gordon and David Younger.

Help is available - For information on services available locally and referral for support please call Department of Health and Human Services on 0417 311 293 for tailored individual advice.

Kennett River

Grocon will be temporarily using the section of the Great Ocean Road, highlighted below, during the clean-up. This area will be used to transfer steel between vehicles so that it can be sent for recycling.



Powercore update

Powercor have assessed fire damaged powerlines in Mitchell Grove, Separation Creek and will commence construction of new powerlines to existing houses early next week.

All going well power should be reconnected prior to Easter.

For further information please contact Powercor on 132206.

Upcoming events:

Sustainable Hook and Vine Festival

The Sustainable Hook and Vine Festival will be held in Torquay, on Saturday, 9th April. The organisers are kindly offering half price tickets to fire affected residents. If you would like to organize a discounted ticket, please e-mail bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au

Apollo Bay Show

The Apollo Bay Show celebrates its 60th year this year! Gates open at 9am, so grab your tickets for a day of food, art and craft, rides, animals and more.

Tickets are available at Apollo Bay Sports Store or at the gate.

CFA Easter Fete

Wye River CFA will be holding their annual fundraising Easter Fete on Saturday 26th March, from 10am – 1pm.

There will be a range of items for sale including handmade crafts, delicious home grown and home made bottled goods, baked items and produce, new and pre-loved designer clothes and accessories, tagged and tested electrical items, toys, toiletries, books and Bric-a-Brac.

There will also be a raffle and a range of auction items to bid on.

Funds raised will be directed towards training and communications facilities within the Fire Station.

For more information or to donate items, please contact Christine Shaw christineshaw68@hotmail.com or phone 0431 877 370

Old Beechy Rail Trail Run

Discover the beauty of the Otways on the Old Beechy Rail Trail with a 16Km Trail Run or a 7Km Run/Walk, between Barongarook and Gellibrand.

This event is a fund raising initiative of the Rotary Club of Colac with monies raised going to local community projects.

Wye River SLSC Wye Revival Family Day

The Wye Revival Family Day will be held on 27th March, from 4.30pm onwards.

Come along and enjoy live entertainment, face painting for the kids, a delicious BBQ and hot jam donuts!

Have your say

Do you have information you would like to share with the community, or an event coming up? Do you have questions you'd like answered?

Please e-mail Emma Diffen, Bushfire Recovery Communications Manager via emma.diffen@colacotway.vic.gov.au so that your event can be shared and questions answered by Colac Otway Shire.