

WYE RIVER SEPARATION CREEK PROGRESS ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2016

**Produced & distributed by the Wye River and Separation Creek Progress
Association Inc**

President's Report

Welcome to the Progress Association's Spring newsletter, which brings you news from all of the community organisations that provide the glue to hold our community together.

It's been a difficult year by any measure. The post-bushfire clean-up, the loss of so many of our beautiful trees, battles with insurance companies, BAL ratings and retaining walls, and then the deluge, the landslips and the closure of the Great Ocean Road right at the start of the school holidays. It's enough to dent the spirit of any community, but we are a resilient mob in Wye and Sep. While many of us will admit to at times feeling tired and dispirited, the signs of recovery are there, as planning permits are lodged and the first buildings get underway. But perhaps the best thing to come out of this is the renewed sense of community, the offers of help and the working together, and the new friendships made and old ones strengthened. More power to your arms.

It's been a busy 6 months for the Progress Association too. The committee has been very concerned about the inter-linked issues of vegetation loss and landslip risk and has argued strongly for retaining as many trees as public safety allows. We have had greatest success with tree management on public land owned by Colac Otway Shire. COS have given a brief to a fresh set of arborists to 'manage and maintain' trees on their land, including Harrington Park, and have promised to share their report before any work is undertaken. We are hopeful of a good outcome with as many trees as possible retained.

We've also been very active in seeking to bring the Riverwalk project to a successful conclusion. Our primary aim has always been to get safe and unimpeded public access through the Big4 campground to the beautiful river upstream, so that you can enjoy the walk without getting your feet wet or tripping over camper's guy-ropes or picnic tables. We are continuing to urge the key parties to commit the necessary resources to establish a Walk that meets the community's needs and entitlements in time for the summer holidays, along with the new playground.

We continue to work on a variety of other issues, including rates, services and questions for candidates in the Council elections and have a close relationship with the Community Resilience Committee.

We will be holding our AGM and Community Forum at the Surf Club on Sunday 22 January 2017. You are all cordially invited and please consider joining the Association if you are not already a member (a form for completion and forwarding is included at the end of this newsletter.) We have been a respected and effective voice for the community for more than 40 years and plan to continue to be so for many years to come. If you would like to nominate for the committee, please get in touch via wye.seppa@gmail.com.

Wishing you all a wonderful (and uneventful) summer at Wye and Sep

Juliet Le Feuvre, President

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE - a report from your community representatives

The community representatives on the Community Resilience Committee (CRC) are Joanne Tyler, Debra Hocking, Paul Greene, Roy Moriarty, Ian Angus, Mark Stokes and myself, Diane Sisely. I am also Co-Chair of the CRC, in conjunction with the Mayor of Colac Otway Shire. The other members of the CRC are Craig Lapsley, Emergency Management Commissioner and Sue Wilkinson, Colac Otway Shire CEO.

The work of the CRC covers four broad areas and Work Groups have been established to progress issues in each of these areas. Additional members from the Wye-Sep community have been appointed to these Work Groups.

Joanne Tyler chairs the Flora, Fauna and Beachscape Work Group, which aims to support the re-vegetation and re-establishment of flora and fauna in our community. The Work Group has raised and worked on a number of issues with the community, state and local government, such as tree management, re-vegetation in roadside reserves, weed management, replanting of Harrington Park and repair of damage to it, clearance of fire debris around town boundaries, information on coppicing and epicormic growth, the clean-up of beaches following removal of landslide debris, the establishment of a clearly delineated river walk along the Wye River (with the Progress Association) and the distribution and placement of bird boxes.

The Flora, Fauna and Beachscape Work Group has held two successful community events – a “Community Environment Day,” featuring a talk by a local indigenous plant expert and the distribution of 400 plants to about 30 property owners, and more recently “A Day with the Birds,” when some 30 people attended a talk by an expert ornithologist and visited local bird habitats.

Ian Angus chairs the Planning, Building and Fire Work Group, which engages with the responsible agencies on issues concerning better drainage, re-establishing local roads, the evaluation of an asset protection zone (APZ) and preparation of a Bushfire Management Plan for Wye and Sep. The Work Group assisted the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP) with the establishment of Neighbourhood Clusters and their consideration of the potential for APZ’s and other fire mitigation strategies. The Work Group is currently assisting the Iluka and Bass Avenue clusters to consider proposals from Powercor to underground power and telecom lines, replacing conventional poles and wires, as existing infrastructure has been completely destroyed in those precincts.

The Planning, Building and Fire Work Group is working with Colac Otway Shire to promote practical community measures over the Cup Day weekend on cleaning up properties and preparing for the next fire season.

Debra Hocking chairs the Community Connection and Wellbeing Work Group; this work group has a number of objectives concerning the longer-term health and mental health needs of the community. It has also been considering options that could assist community members with accommodation, both short and longer term, and for the provision of other supports when required. It has arranged and/or assisted with the holding of community events such as the very successful “Christmas in July” lunch at the Wye Pub.

The Work Group is holding a Community Lunch on Sunday 30th October, over the Cup Weekend, at the Foreshore BBQ area, so come along. It is producing a calendar of events that will be taking place over summer, so watch out for this calendar. The work group is keen to ensure that the different sections of our community are brought together and seeks to promote inclusivity and reduce division.

Paul Greene chairs the Business and Tourism Work Group, which amongst other issues, has been advocating strongly for the interests of businesses in Wye and Sep, which have been very significantly impacted by both the fire and more recently the landslips and multiple Great Ocean Road closures.

The Business and Tourism Work Group has also prepared submissions for funding to hold a Fun Run around Wye and Sep, to develop walking tracks along former timber cutting rail tracks and is pursuing funding for an extension of the Great Ocean Walk to Torquay, thus including Wye and Sep in the route.

As I write this article we yet again find ourselves in the situation of having to pick ourselves up and needing to deal with what Nature has thrown at us. However my sense is that this time we are not starting at the beginning, we are not back in January 2016 and we have the experience and resilience to identify and respond to new challenges. We have forged some effective alliances, sorted out *some* differences, (*but, it must be said, not all!*).

We have, through extensive consultation and feedback, a clear view of what our community wants to look and feel like; and perhaps most importantly of all, we have affirmed our determination to achieve it.

The critical issues facing our community, as we see them, are:

1. Developing more effective road connections and traffic management solutions to ensure Wye and Sep are never again left separated and isolated due to closure of the Great Ocean Road. A much more effective approach for the proper maintenance of the Great Ocean Road is required.
2. Recommencing active community recovery and renewal following the landslips and developing a clear plan of how this will be achieved over the coming twelve months.
3. Implementing effective short and long term initiatives to better drain our environment – both built and natural.
4. Identifying and implementing the most effective options to address the potential for landslip along Paddy's Path.
5. Developing and implementing an effective Bushfire Prevention Plan before the coming summer.

As a community we must be able to contribute to the discussions and decision-making on these and other issues that significantly impact on how we live our lives and how we work as a community, consistent with our agreed [community vision](#). As Community Reps we are determined to ensure that this occurs. Contact us at crcwyesepcommunityreps@gmail.com

Diane Sisely - Co-Chair CRC

CFA Report

As I sit down to write this report, I can't recall what I said last time so hope I don't repeat too much.

It has been an incredibly busy year, with business arising from the Christmas fire. We have attended after-action reviews, given talks to five schools and had to cancel two others, due to road closures.

The interest in the Wye River plan of not just how the brigade set up to defend and protect our major assets, but also the model for the community volunteers being engaged and how they assisted, not just on the day, but continuing on well into January, has been of interest to quite a number of towns, who feel their circumstances are similar to ours. We have met with people from four towns to tell them how we went about setting up the community volunteers.

Our training this year has seen 10 members attain Breathing Apparatus qualification, 1 member complete his low structure course and we are currently training 4 new members, hoping to have them qualified by mid-December.

We also took possession of a new tanker, which required quite a bit of training. There have been a lot of changes since our old tanker was built 25 years ago.

Not long after the tanker arrived, we retired our slip-on (Lois) and replaced her with a new twin cab Toyota Landcruiser. This vehicle was wholly purchased by the brigade, thanks to the extraordinary fundraising efforts of our auxiliary and the very generous support we receive from the whole Wye River community.

We have also had fantastic support from State Government with \$100,000.00 being pledged for an extension to the station for a meeting / training room, storage and change area. A meeting room was identified as something which would have been very useful, not just during the ongoing fire, but also for the recovery. CFA has estimated the extension will cost around \$400,000.00, so all our fund-raising will be directed toward this project.

Finally, I haven't said anything about fire plans or property maintenance; from last Christmas it was evident that to be on alert, ready to leave at a moment's notice, made all the emergency services jobs so much easier and ours far less stressful. Keep updating and reviewing your plan.

Also there is a lot of information around on how to landscape your garden for bushfire, ways to making existing homes more bushfire resilient, as well as rebuilding.

I look forward to seeing many of you over the summer enjoying all that Wye and Sep have to offer.

Roy Moriarty, Captain, Wye River Fire Brigade.

Wye River CFA Auxiliary

WYE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE AUXILIARY ANNUAL SUMMER FETE

Tuesday 3rd January 2017

10.00 am – 1.00 pm

We are looking forward to coming together once again to start organising the CFA Auxiliary Summer Fete. If you can assist in any way, we are always looking for new volunteers. Our fete planning meeting is on Monday 31 October 2016 – 11 am at the Fire Station. Hope to see lots of new and old faces.

The Summer Fete is an important event for the Wye River CFA. Not only is it one of our main fundraising activities, it's also an opportunity for the community to come together.

This year will be a very significant fete, as last summer, due to the fires, we didn't get to have a chance to have our summer fete.

So let's make it one to remember: to get together and have some fun while we raise some money for the community.

Don't hesitate to contact me at anytime, should you need further details.

Christine Shaw - President

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

Given the disasters which have hit Wye River over the past 10 months, it is hard to know at this stage the extent to which this will impact on visitors and beach goers, however, despite this we are determined to ensure that the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club provides business as usual and a safe environment on the beach through summer.

Throughout the winter we have not been idle. You will notice improvements to the clubhouse and bunkhouse. We are grateful to the Victorian Government, who have made funding available to help these improvements, including better heating and cooling, fittings for the kitchen and bigger generators. The Federal Government has also

provided some funding towards improving the flooring. We are also very grateful to the Lorne Op Shop for funding the upgrade of our First Aid Room and for local Peter Latham's help in co-ordinating multiple small projects deputizing for Andrew Hack in his absence. We will soon take delivery of our new IRB.

The part played by WRSLC during the bushfire was acknowledged by emergency services in August 2016. Miranda Bordignon was invited to be a key speaker at the Life Saving Vicotira conference. Her account of the story can be found on the WRSLC website.

The clubhouse has been in continuous use for recovery activity and meetings through winter and we are pleased to be able to support the recovery effort in this way.

New members, individuals, families and children are always welcome. If you would like more details, please contact myself or another committee member or feel free to drop in and see what we do. Membership joining and renewal fees are open from October 1st. If you would like to support the club, you may like to join as an associate member, which does not require you to have a Bronze Medallion or be an active patroller, but allows you to participate in the many other aspects of the Club.

Key dates for the community to be aware of are:

Season opens – Saturday, 26 November, 2016 **Close** Monday, 17 April 2017

(During the non-holiday days, paid life guards patrol the beach. (Supported by Colac Otway Shire). Most of our life guards are our members as well.

Nippers start 27th December – 8th January (see website for program)

Bronze Camp (open to young and old) 2nd- 8th January (you can register on 2nd or contact Ben Wilson prior to this) wyeslscchief@gmail.com (see website for more details)

Social activities:

2016

Summer Fling 28th December

2017

Kids Movie night – 1st January

Junior Ipod shuffle night 4th and 14th January

Trivia night – 7th January 2017

Club Championships – 28th January.

See you at Wye.....

Debra Hocking, President

Otway Coast Committee Update

The OCC has been working closely with all relevant Government departments to ensure that the projects the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) have been providing updates on are progressing and this article will provide some insight to where we are at today.

Wye River Playground:

A local contractor from Barongarook has been appointed to finish the final design components for site drainage and to carry out the construction of the new playground. Site establishment and removal of the existing infrastructure will commence immediately following the Melbourne Cup weekend. The plans developed with the Wye River and Separation Creek community by the City of Melbourne look great and this will have a positive feel when it opens prior to Christmas.

Wye River Pipes and Pumps:

Dave's H2O has been awarded the contract for this work, which will be a big improvement on what is in place, bringing the pump and pipes up to current standards. For those that are unaware of the setup, the OCC, on behalf of the CFA, OCC and Wye River SLSC pump water from the river beyond the Big 4 Caravan Park. The water is transferred downstream to fill the water tanks located at the CFA. The first tank services the CFA and then feeds and fills a third tank which services the foreshore, including the caravan park. The upgrade works are due to be completed by early December. The pipes and pumps will ensure water is available as and when needed.

Foreshore Infrastructure:

We hope to release some good news regarding some of the Foreshore assets shortly, so please stay tuned and we will update all groups as soon as possible

Wye River Walk:

This project is slowly gaining momentum. Surveys of the river bank have been done and draft specification drawings prepared by the consultant. Ongoing discussions with the WRSCPA and Big4 have been critical in achieving the objective of the project and we believe things are heading in the right direction.

An onsite meeting on 25th October with the Big4, OCC, DELWP and members of the flora, fauna and beachscapes community reference committee aims to ensure all items that may be causing angst are resolved so that we can move on with completing the project before the end of the year.

Paddy's Path:

As seen in the media, heard through the grapevine, and the road closure, we have put a hold on work on Paddy's Path. The OCC were in the midst of putting in handrails and doing some additional track work, before the elements thought they would take over, thus resulting in the position we are in today.

The OCC are supporting VicRoads, DELWP and Colac Otway Shire, where possible, in determining the future actions for Paddy's Path. This is a very complex situation and I suggest keeping an eye on the WyeSep Connect website for further updates.

The OCC look forward to building on and continuing our relationship with the Wye River and Separation Creek Progress Association (WRSCPA) as both groups move forward.

It is also important, given we do value your input and comments, that you direct any queries you may have on OCC matters to ourselves, as well as the WRSCPA representatives. This allows for prompt responses to Juliet and the committee and allows us to discuss projects and other matters that may arise. The WRSCPA is the voice to you and your community.

The OCC look forward to providing regular updates and if you have any suggestions, queries or comments, please address these with the WRSCPA. We look forward to speaking and working together as the projects gain momentum.

Anthony Alfirenko, General Manager, Otway Coast Committee

ESTUARYWATCH

During the recent challenges to our community, the Wye River EstuaryWatch group has continued its regular monitoring of our river estuary conditions throughout the year.

September 14th will long be remembered for the serious rain event it brought, resulting – amongst other more critical matters – in a temporary and perhaps longer-lasting change in our river and estuary. The river has resumed its familiar, narrow, meandering path across the beach to the sea, but there was a noticeable shifting of sand which has restored it to its previous banks beside the playground near the bridge. This highlights the value of the database our monitoring has established, against which such events can be compared.



We are always on the lookout for new members, and were very glad to welcome Mary Eckhardt to our group this year. Mary has joined the Waterwatch group as well, and is a very valuable and enthusiastic member of our team.

Monitoring is at 10 am on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month and usually takes about half an hour. New members are given formal training by our CCMA Co-ordinator, Rose Herben. We anticipate Rose will be at the CFA Auxiliary fete on Tuesday 3rd January to provide information and answer any queries you might have if you are interested in taking on this commitment.

In the meantime, you are welcome to come along and join us to see just what estuary monitoring entails.

Yvonne Sheppard 0407 883 116

WATERWATCH

Waterwatch is a citizen science program for monitoring waterway health. The Wye River Waterwatch group is a team of 8 volunteers who monitor the Wye river water quality **each month** and undertake a macro-invertebrates (bugs) survey **twice per year**.

Water samples are collected at the fishing platform (0.1km from Wye River bridge) and at the Big Tree (approx. 0.6km from the Wye River bridge). The water is tested to measure the water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH (level of acidity or alkalinity), phosphate levels, electrical conductivity, and turbidity, and we take note of any changes or events that might affect the river. The measurements indicate that the river water is good quality. Recent surveying of macro-invertebrates also suggest that the river was healthy. The data collected can be viewed at http://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/water_data_portal.php

Big Tree <http://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/site/213907>

Fishing Platform <http://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/site/213906>

The EPA conducted regular water quality monitoring in Wye River post-fire to see if there was any impact to water quality, particularly after rainfall events. The data collected by the Wye River Waterwatch team over the past two years was used as a reference point. This highlights the value of having a data base that measures the health of the river each month. The EPA data has not shown any significant negative impacts after the fires.

David Mossop, the Program Coordinator - Citizen Science from the EPA Victoria, visited the Wye River Waterwatch team in May and demonstrated some data collection methods. We now have more sensitive instruments to measure the turbidity levels in the river.

As a Waterwatch monitor you are part of a broad network of citizen scientists. The Annual Achievements Report for 2014-15 is available : [EstuaryWatch & Waterwatch Annual Achievements Report 2014-2015 flip book](#)

Deidre Murphy and Kristen Lees from Corangamite Catchment Management Authority provide ongoing training and support for the Waterwatch team. No previous experience in this area is necessary to be a volunteer - just an interest in the water quality and the environment. We welcome new members. Please join us for a walk along the river to get an understanding of what we do. We usually meet on the first Sunday of the month at 10.15am at the CFA

[Gail Chittleborough - gail@chittleborough.com.au](mailto:gail@chittleborough.com.au)



Mary and Heidi gathering micro-invertebrates



Mark, Carolyn and Mary do their Mystery Samples

The Spirit Foundation

Following the Christmas Day bushfires, the Spirit Foundation received over \$300,000 in funds from direct donations, varied fundraisers, the Wye/Sep Banding Together fundraiser, the Australian Red Cross and the Bendigo Bank Foundation.

The Wye/Sep Recovery Group (WSRG,) formed immediately after the fires, was requested to be the body making recommendations to the Spirit Foundation. The WSRG recommendations to the Spirit Foundation on how this money should be distributed to house owners was based on any of the following criteria.

1. Your home was destroyed in the catastrophe

2. Your home was made uninhabitable following the fire
3. Your home survived, but it is/was behind the safety fence and you had no access to it, until at least 24th March 2016.

Further, the Australian Red Cross and The Spirit Foundation had additional criteria, the key ones being:

- “Financial support to individuals and families in necessitous circumstances as a direct result of the bushfire disaster”
- “Direct benevolent relief by way of financial assistance to overcome and alleviate the causes of disadvantage and the effects of poverty, misfortune, destitution and helplessness”
- “The financial relief alleviating health, housing, transportation services, communication services and welfare costs”

The WSRG checked applications to make sure the necessary Statutory Declaration had been fully filled in, including, name, eligibility, bank details, privacy statement, signature, witness etc. The WSRG did not make any subjective decisions regarding any application. Decisions were made at the discretion of the Spirit Foundation, in consultation with the Australian Red Cross and the Wye/Sep Banding together Committee.

A formula, following the Spirit Foundation and the Australian Red Cross guidelines, and precedents from other fire disasters was used to allocate funding. Permanent residents received preference over those owning holiday houses, who in turn received preference over non-destroyed but displaced residents.

Payments were made on a periodic basis, mainly due to a number of red tape issues. However as of now, 99.9% of the monies have been distributed. The total number of payees was 39, and there were 112 of either cheques or direct deposits made, each with an accompanying personal email to the recipient.

There were some scurrilous rumours regarding the Spirit Foundation distributing monies to other non-fire affected parties such as for university studies, arts bodies and infrastructure projects etc. I can categorically confirm that all the monies were solely distributed for the benefit of Wye/Sep residents, and under their Trust Deed, this was their only choice that could be made.

The WSRG would like to acknowledge the unerring friendship of the Spirit Foundation in their advice and understated donated time in their support for affected residents.

We would also like to acknowledge the number of letters we received from home owners who declined assistance on the basis that there were others more in need, and this made us feel proud to be part of the community that makes Wye And Sep.

Peter Latham - Ex Chair WSRG

Otway Coast Tourism

Lobbying, sharing alerts on road closures and shuttles are just some of the activities of Otway Coast Tourism. We also meet together periodically to share demand trends, what place to advertise for best bookings and network together.

We cover all tourism operators from Wye to Wongarra including food and accommodation. We very much welcome owners who just want to rent out their holiday house.

It is worth considering that tourism activity flows through to the local economy – pub and cafes, staff, cleaners and tradies, helping make our villages sustainable for the future.

Lately we have been lobbying for a long term fix for the Great Ocean Road so it is less affected by slips and closures and for investment in regional tourism. We are small but active and we like to think we get results.

We will soon work on a destination plan for Wye River after a recent \$50,000 grant and make some local improvements to help visitors appreciate tourism in our beautiful villages.

If you are interested in being on our email list of 50+ persons, or to just have a chat about tourism, please call me.

Rex Brown, Chair, Otway Coast Tourism, 0408 006 992 , rexbrown@gmail.com.

The Progress Association prints material from contributors, uncut. The views expressed are theirs and may (rarely) not coincide with those of the Association.

PROGRESS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM (FOR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS)

To ensure continuation of the work of the Progress Association, and the printing of this Newsletter, if you haven't already done so, **PLEASE (RE) SUBSCRIBE FOR 2017.**

Annual membership is \$10 per person or \$15 per family. An easy option, recently introduced, is that you may also renew your membership for 3 years. **Free membership of the Progress Association for 2016 is available to all of those who have lost their houses.**

Please complete the form below and send it, together with your subscription to: **The Treasurer, WRSCPA, C/- Post Office, Wye River Vic 3221.**

You may also pay by direct transfer to our bank account: WESTPAC, Colac branch: BSB 033-637, Account Number 99-0081, Account Name: WRSCPA.

Following lodgement of payment, please e-mail wye.seppa@gmail.com advising who you have paid for, the amount paid, and giving the information requested below. This is important because we must, by law, keep a record of current members. Receipts will be issued on request.

Please indicate whether **Individual** or **Family** membership; **renewing?** (tick)

Name/s: (Please print)

Addresses: (Wye/Sep & other, if applicable)

Phone No: (Wye/Sep & other, if applicable)

Email: