



Creightons Creek Fire

Message from the Mayor, Deb Swan

On behalf of all the Councillors, Management and Staff I would like to thank all those who gave their time to assist others during the fire events around Creighton's Creek. We are constantly reminded of what amazing and resilient communities we have in Strathbogie Shire. In this newsletter you will see the process we are working through to make sure everyone's voice is heard (Thanks Caroline!) so we can continually learn from our experiences. So far my experience with all the agencies and volunteers at the relief centre, meetings and recovery sessions, has been outstanding; I also congratulate those people who have been affected, for their patience and common sense during this emergency, we will continue to provide assistance, where ever possible, so please contact us if you have any concerns. We are currently working to create a dedicated web site page so all the information will be in the one place, and in partnership with other authorities, creating a recovery implementation plan, as a reference document into the future. I believe country folk and especially experienced farming families have a great understanding of what true community means, as has been demonstrated time and time again through volunteering and attending information sessions both in Euroa and Creighton's Creek. Thank you!

CR. Debra Swan (Mayor)

Message from Steve Crawcour, Chief Executive Officer

As CEO of the Council and a member of our community I am immensely proud of the combined efforts and partnerships between the Council, community and agencies.

It is easy to be negative at times of pressure but it shows when a significant event occurs we can rally around each other, no questions asked.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Mayor and Councillors for their support, the staff for their commitment to the organization and more importantly their community, all the agencies and our great resilient community. One group that utterly deserves the recognition of which words never seem to be enough is that of our volunteers, you make our world (Shire) a much better place and without your efforts we could never overcome these events, well done and thank you.

Steve Crawcour
CEO

Message from Caroline Wallis, Municipal Recovery Manager

We have been through a lot since the fire started on 16 December, 2014, only to see it reappear again on Christmas Day. The various ways in which the community responded to this emergency throughout the long period of response and mop up has been outstanding. A common theme that has emerged from all of the feedback received from the wide range of agencies and support services has been the capacity of the community to help each other, to help themselves and to be prepared.

Whilst there have been challenges, indeed more than a few, as there inevitably are in these times of emergency, the overwhelming picture that has emerged is of a community of people who care and are willing

to give up so much for each other. It has been a privilege for me to be involved as a CFA firefighter, a Creighton's Creek resident, and a Council officer and I know why I love living in this part of the country.

The Relief effort that commenced on the first day of the fire has been enormous. 127 residents registered with the Red Cross at the Wesley Hall Relief Centre in Euroa during the first few days of the fire. Staff members from the Red Cross, the Department of Health and Human Services and Strathbogie Shire Council were present to provide support and assistance for people who needed a safe place to gather. Other agencies provided information at community meetings and workshops. All of this effort means that our community has received, and continues to receive, what it needs to recover from this event.

During the days of response, both at the height of fire fighting efforts on 16 and 17 December and again on 25 December, and the many days in between and continuing right up until New Year's Eve, I can say that the effort put in by everyone involved was truly immense. Every person able to help in some way did so.

I would personally like to thank all of the Council staff members who volunteered many hours of their time to staff the phones, the relief centre and the Council's coordination centre. Our outdoor crews worked tirelessly to make the roads safe, with many giving up their time on Christmas Day to be available when needed. I also would like to thank all of the members of my team who provided much needed organisation and support in the Relief Centre when I was unavailable. As a small Council we all wear multiple hats, and my team dropped what they were doing to focus on helping fire affected residents during that first terrible week. Robbie Rae performed most competently as the Recovery Manager in setting the centre up in difficult circumstances and then remaining on site for many days to provide information and support to residents.

Our Director David Woodhams and CEO Steve Crawcour provided essential leadership and support during this time and made sure that whatever needed to get done was done. David also spent many hours on a truck in his other role as CFA firefighter. Roy Hetherington, our Director of Asset Services and his team have been working tirelessly throughout the event to make sure our roads are safe and accessible and response agencies had access to the equipment they needed.

I'd also like thank Brian Kelly for keeping me safe on the back of the truck and my husband Bernie for his unflagging support and commitment to the fight, even with his dodgy hip! There are just so many people to acknowledge so I know I have left many of you out. All I can say is thank you. You know who you are.

Caroline Wallis
Manager Community Development and Municipal Recovery Manager

Recovery Committee and Plan

Under the Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan a Community Recovery Committee has been formed, and one of the first jobs for the Committee is to formulate and agree on a Recovery Plan. The Plan will provide a summary of the fire event; list the members of the Recovery Committee, its aims, and outline the objectives of the Plan with actions and timelines. The objective of the Recovery Committee includes:

- Identifying the needs and resource requirements
- Coordinating information, resources and services
- Liaising, consulting and negotiating
- Monitoring the recovery process

Copies of the Plan, community newsletter and other information will be available on Council's website as soon as possible.

The Committee will meet fortnightly and comprises local representatives of the key response agencies, Council, and community representation by the Brigade captains from Crieghtons Creek, Longwood, Gooram and Ruffy. If you have any queries or issues you'd like to raise with the committee, please contact your brigade captain, or email Council at info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au Attention: Municipal Recovery Manager.

Key Issues

Some key issues have been identified so far in community meetings, community feedback and the first Recovery Committee Meeting held on 15 January 2015.

These issues and the strategies discussed to deal with them now and in the future include:

1. Traffic Management Points (TMP). It was acknowledged that there were some issues with traffic management points, and in particular the ease with which key services were able to pass through. Some delays and difficulties were present in the early stages, including access by veterinary staff and stock feed suppliers. These problems have been raised with key regional personnel to ensure improvements in future. A suggestion was made to provide the TMP personnel with a contact list of key local agencies, such as local vets, to assist them in identifying quickly which services should be allowed through early on.
2. Waste disposal of fencing materials. Care should be taken if burying fencing materials and ensure that action complies with the EPA requirements. Council is investigating potential for burial pits and will advise the community if this can be provided. Metal recyclers may collect the material – the best course of action is for landowners to contact the recyclers directly.
3. Communications. Absentee rate payers who do not live full time in the Shire have requested information be available on Council's website. Council is working hard to set up a dedicated web page and this will be available as soon as possible.
4. Trees over fences. Support to clean up trees pushed over fences in the efforts to make roadsides safe will be provided. Coordination of requests is through the Council's Municipal Recovery Manager.
5. Control lines. Support to restore control lines will be provided. Coordination of requests is through the Council's Municipal Recovery Manager.
6. Animal Welfare. DEPI conducted initial animal health assessments on day 2 of the fires however often stock exhibit health problems associated with the fire several days after the event. A request has been put to DEPI to include follow up visits several days after the initial assessments to support farmers with decision making for future events.
7. Weibye track access. The track is a fire access road and will be dealt with by CFA to ensure good access is maintained.

Request for timber

Janet Hagen has advised that the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority has funding to collect three tip truck loads of timber to be used as habitat in the Hughes Creek catchment. In particular timber with hollows and root ball intact is sought. However any type of larger pieces can be used. If anyone has timber they would like collected for this purpose, please call Janet on 0458 904 268.

Services Directory

Please find below a list of useful contact information for key services. If you require information or support but are unsure where to go, or you have any issues you'd like to discuss, please contact Council's Municipal Recovery Manager on 5795 0000.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Strathbogie Shire Council	109A Binney Street Euroa	03 5795 0000

CONTACT LIST

ASSISTANCE	AGENCY	CONTACT DETAILS
Local Government - Coordinating rehabilitation of fire suppression activities (dangerous trees, water	Strathbogie Shire Council	W: www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au P: (03) 5795 0000 E: info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au

replacement, fencing, control lines)		
	Municipal Recovery Manager – Caroline Wallis	W: www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au P: (03) 5795 0000 M: 0437 680 303 E: info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au
	Municipal Recovery Manager – Robbie Rae	W: www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au P: (03) 5795 0000 E: info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au M: 0413 276 687
Health and Wellbeing	Department of Health and Human Services Victorian Emergency Recovery Information	www.recovery.vic.gov.au/victorian-bushfires-2014 1300 799 232
	Howard Shell, Department of Health and Human Services Bushfire Recovery Manager	M: 0417 396 925
	Ivan Lister – Rural Outreach and Mental Health First Aid and referrals	M: 0407 856 374
	Nexus Counselling Service	1300 773 352
	Red Cross – Mental Health First Aid, Support and referrals.	http://www.redcross.org.au/emergency-resources.aspx
	Victorian Council of Churches Community Support (non demoninational) Fred Jungwirth	M: 0408 443 288
Animal welfare, agricultural recovery, farm planning, aerial maps, pasture recovery, soil conservation advice	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (formerly DEPI)	136 186
	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning - Brendan Purcell – Planning Manager	M: 0429 858 173
	Gecko Clan Landcare Network Kerri Robson	M: 0418 140 710 www.geckoclan.com
Receipt of agricultural donations and coordination	Gecko Clan Landcare Network	Kerri Robson 0418 140 710 www.geckoclan.com
Financial counselling assistance to farmers	Goulburn Murray Hume AgCare, Rural Financial Counselling Service	Carl Fraser 0428 859 842 or 1300 834 775 Ken Slatter 0407 844 558 or (03) 5735 4300
Free legal advice, insurance assistance and referrals, fencing, replacing lost documents or any other legal	Disaster Legal Help Victoria	1800 113 432 8.45am – 5.15pm Mon to Fri

issues		
Natural asset protection, water quality, replacment of previously funded works	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority	Tony Kubeil - 0408 597 213 Charlie Sexton - 0488 196 216 Mark Turner – 5822 7705
	Mike Stephens and Associates – Jim Shovelton	M: 0407 953 445
	VFF – Ian Feldtman	M: 0427 503 143
Business, tourism and industry	Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (formerly RDV)	Mark Martin 0417 016 385 or (02) 6059 0201
Legal Assistance – free service, assist with insurance policy, fencing disputes, property rights, debts	Disaster Legal Help Vic – Angela Costi and Hugh Bastiaan	1800 113 432
Financial Assistance – free services, debt management, financial planning	Rural Financial Counsellor – Ken Slatter	M: 0407 844 558
Fencing volunteers – clean up, new fencing Equipment for fencing	Blaze Aid John Lillico Barry Thompson	M: 0488 018 625 M: 0488 018 624
	Dhurringile Prison crew Geoff Orr (coordinated by MRM – Council)	Contact MRM at Council – 5795 0000
	Uniting Church – Alan Stafford	M: 0412 578 237
	Lions Club – Ern Walder	M: 0409 554 762
Fencing waste and disposal	Council waste depot - Euroa	P: 5795 0000 for times and details or www.strathbogjie.vic.gov.au
Other	DPR Insurance Brokers – Dennis Rebbeck	P: 5795 3642
	Sharman Stone’s office – Steve Cooper	P: 5821 5371
	TELSTRA Disaster Relief	P: 132203 (option 1)
	School fee and other relief	Contact your school Principal or Bob Stephens North Eastern Victoria Region Department of Education and Early Childhood Development nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au PO Box 403, Benalla, Victoria 3672150 Bridge Street East, Benalla P: 8392 9500
	CFA Vegetation Management Officer & Fire Investigation for Hume Region – Phil Hawkey	M: 0438 383 131

PERSONAL WELFARE CONTACTS

Lifeline	24/7 crisis support	131 114
Beyond Blue	24/7 crisis support	1300 224 636
Men’s Line Australia	24/7 crisis support	www.mensline.org.au or 1300 789 978
Women’s Domestic Violence	24/7 crisis support	1800 015 188
Kids Helpline	24/7 crisis support	1800 551 800

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Beware of falling trees and branches, including both burnt trees and heat- affected ones
- Beware of onlookers on roadsides, and emergency vehicles on roads
- Beware of wandering livestock
- Understand that many residents are fatigued and in need of support

ROAD CLOSURES/TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT POINTS

Information on updated road closures is available via 13 11 70 or the VicRoads website www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

BUSHFIRES AND WATER TANKS

If you live in a bushfire affected area, you should be aware that your private water source could become contaminated. If your water looks, smells or tastes, funny, it may be contaminated from debris, ash, fire retardants or dead animals. You should not source water from a creek that has been affected by bushfire as the water may be contaminated. Water drawn from deep bores or wells should still be safe to use. If you suspect contamination, use an alternative water supply for drinking and food preparation. More information regarding water contamination and use of affected water can be found on the Better Health Victoria website at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

WATER REPLENISHMENT

Property owners who are aware of water from their property being used for fire fighting purposes may be eligible for replenishment. Please contact Strathbogie Shire Council (Municipal Recovery Manager)

STAY INFORMED

For information on fires in Victoria and general fire safety advice, please contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) on free call 1800 240 667.

Callers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech/communication impairment can call VBIL via the National relay Service on 1800 555 677.

Check for the latest warnings and advice messages at either www.depi.vic.gov.au/fires or www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Social Media	Local Radio	TV
Facebook: facebook.com/cfavic Twitter: @CFA_Updates	ABC 97.7 FM/ABC 106.5 FM	Sky News