

# Community Newsletter

## Longwood Berrys Lane Bushfire 19 March 2026

### Community Recovery Hub – here to support you

The recent fires have had a significant impact on our community. Recovery looks different for everyone — and it takes time.

The Community Recovery Hub in Euroa is here to help. It's a welcoming place where you can get support, ask questions and connect with services that can assist your recovery. You don't have to navigate this alone.

#### How we can support you:

We know many people have questions about rebuilding. A planner and municipal building surveyor will be available at the Hub every Wednesday from 12pm to 3pm to answer questions about planning permits and the rebuilding process.

At the Hub you can also access, one-on-one recovery support, health and wellbeing services, advice on rebuilding and clean-up, information about financial assistance and grants, business recovery support and referrals to government services.

The Hub will also host community meetings, information sessions and wellbeing activities — because recovery is about connection as much as it is about rebuilding.

#### Visit the Recovery Hub

**34 Railway Street, Euroa**

**Open Monday to Friday**

**9am to 3pm**

If you're unsure how the Hub can support you, take a look at our upcoming Hub event in the "Upcoming community events" section later in the newsletter.



### Community voices shaping recovery in Ruffy

On Friday night, community members came together in Ruffy to reflect on the past nine weeks since the Longwood fires and to start shaping what recovery looks like for the months and years ahead. This is the first of many sessions that will be held to help shape recovery.

What stood out most in the conversation was the strength of the community. People spoke about neighbours helping neighbours, shared meals, quiet check-ins and the many ways locals stepped up to support each other. That sense of care and connection has been a defining part of the recovery so far.

At the same time, there was a strong acknowledgement of the scale of impact. Many families are still dealing with loss, disruption and the ongoing emotional and physical toll of rebuilding. Recovery is not simple — it takes time, energy and persistence.

People also spoke openly about the challenges of getting back on track. From navigating permits and insurance to the cost and complexity of rebuilding homes, sheds and fences.

The landscape itself tells part of the story. While the damage is still visible, there are also early signs of regeneration, offering some hope alongside the loss.

Looking ahead, the community identified a number of clear priorities for recovery:

- getting properties and farms operational again
- faster access to financial and practical support
- cutting red tape to make rebuilding easier
- restoring community facilities and gathering spaces
- supporting environmental recovery
- strengthening communication, transparency and leadership.

There was also strong support for continued community involvement, including the potential for a Community Recovery Committee to help guide local priorities.

A key theme throughout the evening was the importance of clear communication, fairness and coordination across all levels of support. People want to stay informed, be heard and see steady, visible progress.

As recovery continues, one thing is clear, while the fires have had a profound impact, the community's strength, resilience and willingness to support each other will play a critical role in rebuilding and shaping a strong future.



## Council advocating for support to help our community recover

Strathbogie Shire Council has continued its advocacy efforts this week, with Council at the March 17 Council Meeting unanimously endorsing the Disaster Advocacy Strategy. This strategy will sit alongside the Strathbogie Shire Advocacy Strategy 2025-2029.

The Disaster Advocacy Strategy will be used to advocate for key projects that provide long-term benefits to fire-impacted communities.

While the emergency response has passed, many residents, farmers and businesses are still dealing with the ongoing impacts. Rebuilding homes, restoring farms and supporting local businesses will take time, and

Council is working to ensure our community receives the support needed for both short and long-term recovery.

### Community recovery & resilience

Community recovery takes time and relies on sustained coordination, accessible services and strong local leadership. Council is central to this work, connecting residents with support, coordinating recovery efforts and ensuring community voices shape the process.

However, delivering effective recovery requires dedicated staff, resources and ongoing operational funding. Without adequate long-term investment, essential services risk winding down before communities are fully restored.

Council is seeking the Victorian Government's continued partnership through increased recovery funding to maintain vital services and support our communities throughout both immediate and long-term recovery

### Economic recovery and local businesses

Council is advocating for practical economic recovery support, including locally based business recovery specialists, financial assistance for small businesses and farmers, and expanded support for agricultural recovery such as freight subsidies, feed assistance and rural financial counselling.

These measures will help stabilise businesses, protect local jobs and support the industries that underpin the Shire's economy.

### Tourism, agriculture, viticulture

### and the equine sector

Tourism and primary industries are critical to the Strathbogie Shire economy. The fires have led to event cancellations, reduced visitation and damage to farming and production infrastructure.

Council is advocating for targeted recovery support for tourism, agriculture, viticulture and the equine sector, including funding for regional events and visitor activation to help restore confidence and bring people back to the region.

### Planning support to rebuild

### homes and farms

Council has also asked the Victorian Government to introduce temporary planning measures to support faster rebuilding across fire-affected areas.

This includes streamlined approvals for replacement homes and agricultural infrastructure, flexibility for temporary accommodation and additional planning resources to support recovery.

## Community projects

Local halls, pavilions and community facilities played an important role during the fires and continue to support recovery.

Council is advocating for funding to upgrade key community facilities so they can operate as resilient hubs during emergencies and recovery periods.

## Mental health support

Recovery is not only about rebuilding infrastructure. Council is advocating for ongoing locally delivered mental health and allied health services to support individuals, families and farming communities as recovery continues.

## ESVF waiver

Council is also seeking a waiver of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) levy for properties directly impacted by the fires to help ease financial pressure during recovery.

Council will continue to advocate strongly for the support our community needs as we rebuild and recover together

## The wombat who waited

**Written and contributed by Fiona Steel, Chair of the Tablelands Community Centre which was destroyed in the fires at Ruffy.**

In the heart of the Tablelands Community Centre playground, before the fires changed everything, there sat a wooden wombat who had quietly become part of our story.



*Ruffy Wombat before the fires.*

Carved by sculptor Shlomit Moria with a gift for turning timber into personality, the wombat - also affectionately known as Wombat - was more than a sculpture. He was a meeting place, a climbing frame, a photo backdrop and a patient friend to the children and adults alike.

When the fires swept through, they took so much from us: our community centre, our playground, and the familiar spaces where we gathered, celebrated, and supported one another. In the aftermath, as we walked

through the ashes of what had been, it was hard to imagine anything surviving.

But there was Wombat.

Charred and cracked, blackened by heat and fire yet still unmistakably himself, he remained right where he had always been. A little battered but still standing. Still watching over the place he'd called home.

We lifted him gently, as though he were a living creature, and carried him away from the ruins. He's blackened now, his once-smooth back rough and scarred but his spirit remains.

And so, he waits.

In storage, safe from the weather, Wombat rests like a guardian on pause. He carries the memory of the community centre and playground in every burn mark, every split in the timber. He is a reminder of what was lost - but also of what survived waiting for the day our community returns and rebuilds. He carries the marks of what we've been through, but he also carries the spirit that has kept us going: resilience, stubborn hope and the belief that what we lost can rise again.

One day, when the Tablelands Community Centre is rebuilt and people's laughter fills the air once more, Wombat will come home. Not as a reminder of destruction, but as a symbol of survival - and of a community that refuses to give up.

Until then, our wombat waits for us, just as we work toward returning to him.



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## Wastewater systems after the January 2026 Bushfires

If your property was affected by the recent bushfires, your wastewater or septic system may also have been damaged. Even systems that look intact can have hidden issues, so it's important to check them before use.

### Decommissioning damaged systems

- Concrete tanks can be safely decommissioned onsite after being pumped out, opened, and filled with clean earth.
- Plastic tanks must be pumped out and taken to a licensed landfill.
- Damaged plastic pipes should be collected and disposed of properly. Council does not require approval for decommissioning.

### Repair or replacement

- Minor repairs—like replacing melted pipes, lids, pumps, or electrical parts—can be done by a licensed plumber without Council approval.
- If the system is beyond repair, you'll need Council approval to alter or replace it.

### Rebuilding or temporary accommodation

You may be able to reuse an undamaged system when rebuilding or placing temporary accommodation onsite.

A wastewater permit is required if:

- you install temporary accommodation
- you rebuild and need to alter or replace the system
- your home is intact but the wastewater system is not.

A plumber's inspection and report will be needed for permit applications.

### Need more information?

Full details - including planning requirements and permit types - are available in the fact sheet at [www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/services/emergency-preparedness/2026-bushfires/bushfires-recovery/2026-bushfires-clean-up-support/](http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/services/emergency-preparedness/2026-bushfires/bushfires-recovery/2026-bushfires-clean-up-support/)

For questions, contact Council's Environmental Health Officer on 1800 065 993.

## Help if your property has been damaged

Help to clean-up your property is available if you are uninsured or underinsured. Emergency Recovery Victoria will remove eligible damaged homes, businesses and community assets at no cost.

Community assets are social and cultural spaces. They include things like town halls and sports facilities. Supporting structures, like sheds, may also be eligible.

Visit [vic.gov.au/register-for-clean-up](http://vic.gov.au/register-for-clean-up) or call the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760

## Mental health support

Your emotional wellbeing is as important as your physical health and financial circumstances. Major emergencies can have a significant impact on your life and the lives of those around you.

You might feel overwhelmed, exhausted, or unsure where to start. These are all normal responses.

If you find yourself experiencing strong emotions, talking about your worries and feelings as well as remaining connected to others can make them more manageable. It is important to identify what actions can be taken to address the source of your concerns.

Seeking help is a sign of strength and often the first step in recovery.

If you or someone close to you is feeling overwhelmed:

### For immediate support, contact:

- Lifeline 131 114
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
- Mens Line 1300 789 978
- Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800
- National Centre Farmers Health 03 5551 853

## Subscribe to this newsletter

If you'd like to receive this newsletter directly in your inbox, please follow the link provided and enter your email details.

<https://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/services/emergency-preparedness/2026-bushfires/2026-bushfires-stay-informed/>

Your information will only be used for this purpose.

**If you have suggestions for future editions, we'd love to hear from you.**

Please email us at [info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au).



Contact the Customer Service team on 1800 065 993  
Email [info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au](http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au)  
Emergency Recovery Hotline: 1800 560 750

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## Upcoming Community events

### Looking after yourself after the fires

#### - a community recovery event

Join us at Creightons Creek Hall on Saturday 21 March for a community gathering focused on connection, support and recovery.

Although the fires are behind us, many people still feel the ongoing tiredness and stress that can follow. Coming together - sharing a meal, catching up, and checking in on neighbours - can make a real difference.

The Creightons Creek Hall/CFA, with support from Council, is hosting this event featuring two highly respected disaster recovery specialists:

- Dr Rob Gordon
- Anne Leadbeater

After the speakers, stay for dinner and acoustic music - a chance to relax, reconnect, and enjoy time with your community. This evening is all about slowing down, sharing food and supporting one another. Everyone is welcome.

**When: Saturday 21 March 2026**

**Time: Guest speakers at 5pm, followed by dinner**

**Where: Creightons Creek Recreation Reserve**

### Recovery on the Hill

Longwood East, Longwood, Locksley, Upton Hill and Avenel communities will gather on 29 March at the Upton Hill Fire station to start the recovery conversation for that community.

**When: Sunday 29 March 2026**

**Time: 9am till 11am**

**Where: Upton Hill Fire Station 1475 Upton Rd, Upton Hill**

Join us for breakfast and a coffee RSVP by 25 March 2026 [recoveryonthehill2026@gmail.com](mailto:recoveryonthehill2026@gmail.com)

### Recovery Hub Community Day

#### - you're invited

**Join us at 34 Railway Street, Euroa on Saturday 28 March 2026, from 9am to 11am, for a relaxed and friendly community catch-up with the Council Recovery Hub team.**

Enjoy a bacon and egg roll from Euroa Rotary and grab a coffee while you chat with the team, ask questions and connect with neighbours.

What's on

- Euroa Gym - kids' activities and coffee van

- BlazeAid - meet the volunteers or register to get involved

- Biodiversity Recovery Alliance - paint a nesting box, try nature craft or create your own bee hotel

Come along, say hello and be part of this welcoming community morning

### Art of renewal:

#### RAGE Recycled Art Exhibition in Euroa

This Easter, Euroa will host the inaugural RAGE Recycled Art Exhibition from 2-8 April, bringing together more than 30 artists from across Victoria.

The exhibition will feature around 60 artworks created almost entirely from recycled and reclaimed materials - from salvaged metal and textiles to everyday objects given a new life through art.

Several of the participating artists were impacted by the January fires, making the exhibition a powerful reflection of renewal and resilience. At a time when many people in our community are focused on recovery, RAGE offers a reminder that creativity, connection and new beginnings can grow from difficult moments.

The event is also expected to attract visitors from across the state over the Easter period, bringing welcome activity to Euroa and supporting local cafés, shops and accommodation providers as the region continues its recovery.

The Exhibition was an initiative of the Rotary Club of Euroa and supported by Victorian Government Tiny Towns Fund in conjunction with Strathbogie Shire Council

Residents and visitors are warmly invited to explore the exhibition across several locations in Euroa during Easter week.

RAGE Recycled Art Exhibition

**When: 2-8 April 2026**

**Where: Euroa, North East Victoria**

#### Venues

1. St Paul's Hall - 1A Clifton Street
2. Vacant Block - Cnr Binney Street and Alex McMasters Lane
3. Sheilas Art Gallery - 52 Binney Street
4. Old Klofts Garage Site - Top of Binney Street on Railway Street
5. Euroa Arboretum - 76 Main Road

**Venues open from 10am - 4pm daily**

**Entry is free**

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# Recovery on the Hill

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Longwood East - Longwood - Locksley - Upton Hill - Avenel

## *Community connection morning*

**Let's talk about how to progress our communities recovery.  
Where to from here?**

*Sometimes the best thing we can do is come together-share a meal, catch up and check in on our neighbours*



When: Sunday 29 March 2026

Where: Upton Hill Fire Station

1475 Upton Rd, Upton Hill

Time: 9am till 11am

Join us for breakfast and a coffee

RSVP by 25 March 2026

[recoveryonthehill2026@gmail.com](mailto:recoveryonthehill2026@gmail.com)

or just drop in for a coffee

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Everyone in the community is invited

# RAGE

Regional  
Art  
Group  
Euroa

## Recycled Art Exhibition

Euroa, Victoria

2–8 April 2026

REINVIGORATE. RECYCLE. REIMAGINE.

A celebration of the war on waste tapping into the creativity, innovation, and talent thriving in our local communities.

**\$3000 Prize Award**

[www.rageeuroa.com.au](http://www.rageeuroa.com.au)



Rotary Club of Euroa

*Strathbogie*  
SHIRE COUNCIL