

Community Recovery News for the Redesdale Area Fires

Number 32 – Thursday 26th November 2009

“Looking after ourselves and each other”

Everyone in the community is getting anxious about the fire season.



This Saturday 28th November - an informal workshop and lunch, at Redesdale Hall from 12 noon. Christine Nixon [chair of the Bushfire Recovery Authority] will be in attendance from 2pm, and will be present for a question and answer session when the workshop has ended.

The Workshop is led by local psychologist and facilitator, Dr Susie Burke, who is part of the Australian Psychological Society’s (APS) Panel on Bushfire Recovery. This is for anyone in the community, whether directly affected by February’s fires or not. If this date doesn’t suit, please let us know - we will look at running a second session.

Bookings essential for catering, to Ian – 5471 1821 / 0417 147 058

Copies of **Don’t panic - be prepared flyer** will be at the workshop and are at the Barfold Hall. These are the APS’s helpful tips for being psychologically-prepared.

Accommodation needed for fencing volunteers: can you offer a bed for volunteers who are coming to help with the re- fencing efforts. All options considered, beds needed from mid December onwards. Contact Ian or Kirra (details at end of newsletter.)

Farewell Trevor Pollard: a big thankyou to Trevor who is leaving for a well-earned ‘retirement’ at Christmas. [He’ll be working on his farm!]. Trevor has been working on recovery since 8th February and his skills, support and cheerful manner will be missed. Before Trevor leaves, he invites you to use his knowledge and suggests you ask him about his designs for sheep yarding. Contact Trevor on 0408 34 55 79.

Community rally to show our appreciation and support of the CFA and SES: the Castlemaine Churches are organising a public prayer service and blessing of the fire trucks on Sunday November 29th at 2pm at Victory Park, Castlemaine, followed by a BYO picnic in the park. The prayers will be multi-faith and ecumenical. Even if you are not a religious person I invite you to come and support our CFA and SES volunteers by coming along. Fire preparedness material will be available on the afternoon as well. Peace. Rev Gordon Bannon, 5470 6007.

Fencing update: a pneumatic post driver is available for short term loan – but you need to have your own compressor. To arrange a loan, contact Karl, fencing co-ordinator, on 54 234 132 or 0437 27 40 50. The DPI-funded tractor and post driver has had a bit of down time due to mechanical problems, but is now back in use and will be funded until Christmas by a mix of DPI and other funds. \$370,000 has now been invested in fencing recovery through a mix of charitable, corporate and local donors. More details about this and any other aspects of fencing is available at the next fencing working group, 1st December, 5pm at Barfold [**note new time**].



Natural Resources Management Grants: LAST CALL: these grants are for community members who are replanting as part of the Bushfire Recovery effort. Adrian Martins, of the North Central CMA needs **at least** your name and address and outline plans before 4th December. Any questions to Adrian on 5440 1851, or 0427 099 376. The grant application form is at <http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/>

Barfold Hall Drop-in: David Simpkin from Salvation Army and Nerida Melsmith, [a Grief and Loss specialist] will be at Barfold Hall from 10am to 12noon on Thursdays in December [3rd, 10th and 17th December]. Case Managers are also available at this time, and a free lunch is on offer from 12 noon.

Emergency Relief Program: this is a year-round program, not limited to fire-affected people. For more information, contact Castlemaine District Community Health on 5479 1000.

Recovery Working Groups and the Community Recovery Committee [CRC]: the next CRC meeting is Wednesday, 9th December at Barfold Hall at 5.45pm. The Well-being Working Group meets Thursday 3rd December at 1pm at Barfold Hall.

Christmas gifts for local children: CentaCare and the Community Wellbeing Working Group have entered into a partnership with Curves and Toyworld to support the distribution of donated Christmas gifts to local children. The process for gift distribution will be as follows:

- CentaCare will deliver the donated gifts to the Barfold Hall.
- Any parents / caregivers who would like to access the donated gifts will be able to call into the Barfold Hall on Thursday 17 December between 2.30pm and 6pm to choose a gift for any children in their immediate care. (The gifts will be delivered to the Barfold Hall unwrapped to make it easier to select gifts that best match children's age / gender / interests).
- Wrapping paper, tape, scissors and gift tags will be available at the Barfold Hall for parents / caregivers to use if they wish to do so.

Any parent / caregiver in the local community who is finding it hard to 'make ends meet' is welcome to access the donated gifts - this service is not restricted to people who have a 'blue card'. This service will operate on an honesty system ... **parents / caregivers are requested to self-assess your needs, and to select only one gift per child in their immediate care.** There will be no records kept as to who accesses this service. More information from Deb Simpson, 5438 1300.

Black Saturday Book: The City of Greater Bendigo is working with partners to produce a book dedicated to the Black Saturday experience in our community. Sharing our stories not only helps us find common ground with others - whether they be family, friends, colleagues, or people in the wider community - but can also help us make sense of our experiences, both the joys and the struggles. The book hopes to tell the many stories of Black Saturday, the aftermath of the fires, and of course the journey towards recovery for those involved. The success of this book very much relies on the generosity of the community. If you would like to share your story and/or images for possible publication please contact John Holton 5439-3219 or mobile 0448 054 558 or email john@burrenpublications.com

Melbourne city based hotels are still offering accommodation to fire affected people. These include:

- Causeway 353: www.causeway.com.au
- Hotel Windsor: www.thehotelwindsor.com.au
- Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens: www.radisson.com/melbourneau
- Crown Promenade: www.crownpromenade.com.au

To book accommodation, please contact your case manager



Gutter guarding: Northern Leaf Guard is offering fire-affected families and individuals living in fire prone areas a 35% discount to assist with the supply and fit of gutter guard protection. The aluminium mesh is fire retardant, has a CSIRO rating and assists in keeping gutters clear from debris and embers. For a quote, please call Steven Kish on 0400 508 466.

Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme: If you live, work or operate a business in a remote area with no mobile phone coverage, you could get up to \$1000 off the price of a new satellite phone. Ask your local phone dealer about the Australian Government's Satellite Phone Subsidy. The funding is available over four years to 30 June 2013. **Replacement handsets:** applicants who live in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage are eligible for additional subsidies to replace handsets purchased under the Scheme three or more years earlier. To apply visit your phone dealer, call 1800 674 058 or visit www.dbcde.gov.au/satphone

Discussion paper on the fire services levy and property insurance: The Royal Commission is seeking responses from the public on issues related to property loss and insurance:

1. The significant funding of Victoria's fire services through the insurance-based fire services levy and options for reform.
2. The role of insurance in preparing communities for and recovering from future disasters like the Black Saturday bushfires and whether non-insurance and under-insurance [eg. fencing] are problems in Victoria.

All responses to this paper will be considered in the development of the Commission's Final Report which is due in July 2010. Responses close on **Monday, 21 December 2009** and must be accompanied by a coversheet. The paper is available at www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au or hard copies can be obtained by emailing enquiries@royalcommission.vic.gov.au or 1800 243 650.

Free Counselling Services available:

- Short term counselling through CentaCare. Contact Renee Kelly in the Bushfire Recovery Team on 5438 1300. Can be provided in Redesdale or Bendigo, and appointment times and locations can be flexible to suit you.
- Nerida Melsmith, is a Grief and Loss specialist and can talk with anyone in relation to their fire experiences. Nerida is available on Wednesday and Thursday each week – including at Barfold Hall on Thursdays from 10am – 12. Or call Nerida on 0415 060 565.
- Bushfire EAR - immediate counselling, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 1300 78 99 78. The Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Program gives residents six free counselling sessions if you have received grants paid by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund. For more information, see the DHS website www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal
- Heather Steele – youth worker for the fire-affected areas is also a counsellor and can be contacted through Castlemaine District Community Health Service (5470 1000) and Cobaw Community Health Service in Kyneton (54 211 666).

Recovery Staff Contact Details:

Phone: Kirra 5471 1807; and 0429 388 167; Ian, 5471 1821 and 0417 147 058
Email: i.lillington@mountalexander.vic.gov.au ; k.litchfield@mountalexander.vic.gov.au.

Newsletters are also available at:

http://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Page/page.asp?Page_Id=754&h=0 and
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