

# Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

July 2020



## Take Care of Yourself

Six months after the bushfires, disaster mental health expert Dr Rob Gordon has some timely advice about the importance of looking after your mental health at this milestone in recovery. He says this is a difficult time in the process as feelings of fatigue, exhaustion, stress and disillusionment often come to the surface.

"It's common to feel overwhelmed, like it's all too much," Dr Gordon said. "It's common for people to feel a lot of stress when turning their minds to the next steps in the recovery and rebuilding journey. The next 18 months is when health, relationships, social and family life can suffer and create unnecessary problems. Everyone experiences these events in different ways but it's universal to almost everyone that sharing these feelings with others can help to lighten the load."

Dr Gordon said now is the time to slow down and ask, "how are we going?"

We encourage you to share your stories throughout your recovery journey. Email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au) or call **1800 518 222**.

*This monthly newsletter is a joint initiative by Towong Shire Council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria*



## About This Newsletter

This monthly newsletter brings together the latest updates and information to support Towong Shire residents and businesses through bushfire recovery.

This newsletter is a joint initiative by Towong Shire Council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria, with thanks to community members and supporting agencies including DELWP, Agriculture Victoria, Environment Protection Authority Victoria, CFA, Regional Roads Victoria and Parks Victoria.

## Get In Touch

We are continually reviewing and improving the recovery information we provide and how we provide it. If you have feedback, or have a story you would like to share, call **1800 518 222** or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).

## Subscribe Today

To subscribe to the digital newsletter, email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).

For past editions of this newsletter go to [www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery).

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## Royal Commission Bushfire History Project

The 2019-20 Bushfire History Project is an initiative of the Royal Commission into the National Natural Disaster Arrangements. It is an opportunity for people to record their personal experience and share photos and videos taken during the 2019-20 bushfires, or the ongoing recovery, and will form part of the official records of the Royal Commission.

You are invited to contribute videos or photographs taken during the 2019-20 bushfires or the ongoing recovery and/or submit a short video account explaining what you experienced during the bushfires.

For more details go to:

<https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions/2019-20-bushfire-history-project>.

## Get to Know Your Local Recovery Team

Council's dedicated and passionate Recovery Team work together with Bushfire Recovery Victoria and supporting agencies to support you and your community. Get to know them.



### Christine McKee, Communications Officer Bushfire Recovery

#### Tell us a little about yourself

I lived in Corryong for six years from 2006 – 2011 when I co-founded Corryong School of Dance, now Upper Murray Dance. I returned to Central Queensland and spent eight years working in newspapers for NewsCorp as a chief reporter, deputy editor and editor, and at the ABC where I presented the Saturday Breakfast program.

I returned to Corryong in November last year to be closer to my family and now two granddaughters.

#### Tell us a little about your role

As a bushfire specific communications officer, my role is to make sure that everyone in the community can access the information needed to move forward and get the support needed. Also, to engage media to make sure, especially in a COVID-19 world, we are not forgotten. This journey is far from over.

#### What part of working in recovery are you most passionate about?

Making sure no-one is left out of the process. Recovery means different things to different people. People cope in various ways and at their own pace. Everyone has their story and they are all valid.

#### When things get tough, what drives you to keep going?

This community has so much to offer those who live here and those who visit. I want to see us not just survive but thrive.

#### What have you learned so far?

Nothing ever happens as quickly as anyone would like. Some people move like a bullet train, for others that won't work.

#### Something you are proud of?

This community – the people here are welcoming, resilient and know what hard work is. I'm proud to call Corryong home.

## Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub Open

Recovery services have returned to the Recovery Hub in Corryong and the centre is open for drop-in visits with limited numbers to maintain physical distancing. Please continue to stay up-to-date with the latest health advice and avoid visiting if you are unwell.

If you need one-on-one assistance in relation to a specific issue, please make an appointment so we can schedule the available space. Call 1800 518 222 or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).



ABOVE: Sacred Heart, Corryong principal Zoe Nugent and daughter, Kirby, with books donated by Australian Book Sellers Association.

## Community Recovery Groups

Community Recovery Committees are underway. Thank you to the 34 residents from across the Shire who registered to take part. Cr Andrew Whitehead chaired a meeting in Corryong on June 25 to accelerate the journey into community-led recovery. The next meeting will take place July 16. If you would still like to register to join, contact the Recovery Team on 1800 518 222 or drop into the Recovery Hub.

About 40 Cudgewa residents turned out to a meeting on July 2 (with social distancing upheld) to discuss the formation of a Community Recovery Committee. The next meeting was set for July 28 at Cudgewa Hall. Everyone who lives in the Cudgewa area is invited to attend.

A CRC was also established in Walwa on July 8 with Janice Newnham as chair.

Those who had expressed interest in participating in a Community Recovery Committee were invited to take part in a workshop on July 16 at Corryong Health.

## Wellbeing and Support

If you are finding the challenges associated with bushfire recovery and COVID-19 tough, it is important that you seek support.

## Victorian Bushfire Case Support Program

Bushfire Recovery Victoria's Case Support Program is available to Towong residents free of charge. You can access the Case Support Program by calling 1800 560 760.

## Save the Children Workshops

Save the Children Australia is offering parents and caregivers in Towong Shire a new online service free of charge. The 2-hour workshop is designed to provide carers and parents with practical knowledge and tools for identifying triggers and stressors in children.

Save the Children provided support immediately following the bushfires in evacuation and relief centres in Albury and Wagga Wagga. Now the organisation is offering long-term recovery support for communities in Towong Shire.

A free online workshop is being offered to parents and carers in the Towong Shire as a first step. The organisation is looking to work in partnership with local schools and the Towong Shire to support children in schools from Term 3 online and as COVID-19 restrictions are eased, face-to-face.

The program is evidence based and designed to support the recovery and well-being of children by normalising their emotions and developing positive coping mechanisms. Parents and carers can register for the free online workshops by visiting their website: [www.savethechildren.org.au/journeyofhope](http://www.savethechildren.org.au/journeyofhope).

## Accommodation

Bushfire Recovery Victoria is working with the Department of Health and Human Services, housing assistance services and philanthropic organisations to assist to fill the gaps in local communities.

If you have urgent or immediate housing needs please call BRV's case support services on 1800 560 760 who can assist you coordinate your housing requirements.

If your place of residence was impacted during the bushfires and you want to discuss your accommodation needs, call 1800 518 222 or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).

## Financial Assistance

Applications for some financial assistance grants will close on 31 July 2020. We encourage you to contact the Recovery Hub on 1800 518 222 if you need assistance applying for a grant, or working out which ones you might be eligible for.

## Business Support Finder

An online support tool has been developed by Peter Williams and the team at Deloitte to help identify and understand what financial support may be available to you.

To access this free online tool, go to [www.au-deloitte.neotalogic.com/a/bushfire-support-finder?productid=94](http://www.au-deloitte.neotalogic.com/a/bushfire-support-finder?productid=94).

## Grants Closing Soon

### Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grant

The Victorian Government is continuing to support the recovery of bushland and biodiversity with a new grants program to help fund rehabilitation works following the bushfires.

The program not only provides funding for the rehabilitation of public land but is also available to fire-affected private landowners focusing on environmental conservation on their properties.

A total of \$900,000 is available and successful applicants' projects can receive up to:

- \$10,000 for private landholders (Stream 1)
- \$30,000 for environmental volunteer groups (Stream 2)
- \$50,000 for environmental volunteer networks (Stream 3)

For more information and eligibility criteria, visit [www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/BBRG](http://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/BBRG).

**Applications close 20 July 2020.**

### Directly Impacted Primary Producers Grant - \$75,000

Payments of up to \$75,000 are available to eligible primary producers, including apiarists, directly impacted by the bushfires. These grants can help rebuild primary production enterprises, including replacing destroyed on-farm infrastructure (such as fencing).

To see the eligibility criteria and to apply, visit [www.ruralfinance.com.au](http://www.ruralfinance.com.au). **Applications must be submitted by 31 July 2020.**

### Directly Impacted Businesses and Non-Profit Organisations Grant - \$50,000

Payments of up to \$50,000 are available to eligible Victorian small businesses and non-profit organisations (NPOs) affected by the bushfires.

These grants are intended to help pay for costs of clean-up and reinstatement of eligible small businesses that have suffered direct damage from bushfires.

**Apply at [www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/grants-and-assistance](http://www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/grants-and-assistance) before 31 July 2020.**

### Primary Producer Emergency Transport Costs Grant - \$15,000

Transport subsidies of up to \$15,000 are available to eligible primary producers directly impacted by the bushfires.

Eligible primary producers (including apiarists) can claim the subsidy for eligible transport costs that directly address immediate animal welfare and safety needs, including:

- Transporting of emergency fodder
- Transporting of stock to agistment (including returning stock), sale or slaughter
- Transporting of stock drinking water

Applicants can apply for a combination of transport activities undertaken before 30 June 2020. Apply at [www.ruralfinance.com.au/Industry-programs](http://www.ruralfinance.com.au/Industry-programs) or call Rural Finance on 1800 260 425. **Applications close 31 July 2020.**

## Other Financial Assistance Grants

### Bushfire Recovery Grants for Community Facilities

Community groups, not-for-profits, Aboriginal organisations and other social enterprises can apply for the Bushfire Recovery Grants for Community Facilities of up to \$50,000.

Bushfire Recovery Grants for Community Facilities have been established to support local organisations to repair and improve damaged or destroyed community facilities in fire affected communities. BRV will consider applications for projects that that help to bring communities together and support community recovery and resilience.

Examples of projects that could be funded through

the community facilities grants include the repair of playgrounds, skate parks, pavilions or other outdoor facilities, repair of community halls or buildings and energy efficiency and general repairs for facilities that have been damaged or destroyed.

Grant funding cannot be used for offsetting of salaries, operating costs for existing staff, feasibility studies, business plans and third-party sponsorship.

For more information and to apply, please visit [www.brvc.vic.gov.au](http://www.brvc.vic.gov.au).

## New Community Recovery Grants Program

Towong Shire Council has introduced a \$750,000 Community Recovery Grants Program to support locally led recovery initiatives.

The program is open to non-for-profit organisations and community groups including service clubs, community recovery committees and action groups across Towong Shire. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available.

More information at [www.towong.vic.gov.au](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au), Council offices or the Recovery Hub in Corryong.

**Applications for Round 1 close on August 14.**

## NewsCorp Grants

The second round of the News Corp Bushfire Fund Grants has opened and closes on 5 August 2020. Applications are invited from not-for-profit organisations and community groups.

Grants of up to \$25,000 are available to support the recovery of communities in rural areas of Australia in an LGA with a bushfire disaster declaration from September 2019 to January / February 2020.

Grants will be provided to address a range of needs, including but not limited to:

- Community infrastructure and equipment that strengthens volunteer community groups and their activities;
- Emergency equipment and facilities (excludes individual aid);
- Mental health and wellbeing; and
- Rebuilding communities - from infrastructure repairs or upgrades, to governance, capacity building or operational support.

More information can be found at: [https://www.frrr.org.au/NC\\_Bushfire\\_Grants](https://www.frrr.org.au/NC_Bushfire_Grants).

## \$10,000 Grants for Small Business and Primary Producers

The \$10,000 Small Business Bushfire Support Grant is still available. More than 1,000 Victorian businesses, including 120 in Towong Shire have now received the \$10,000 bushfire support grant available to Small Businesses and Primary Producers who experienced loss of income from the bushfires.

It's easy to apply and you aren't required to upload any financial documents if you don't have them right now. Visit [www.ruralfinance.com.au/industry-programs/small-business-bushfire-support-grant](http://www.ruralfinance.com.au/industry-programs/small-business-bushfire-support-grant) Rural Finance can help you find out which grants you're eligible for.

Contact Rural Finance on 1800 260 425 or email [governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au](mailto:governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au).

## Red Cross Rebuilding Grant - \$20,000

The Red Cross Rebuild Grant provides \$20,000 to help homeowners experiencing financial hardship as a direct result of bushfires. It assists with the early stages of rebuilding a primary place of residence and is over and above the original \$20,000 grant available to people who lost their primary place of residence (including those renting). Visit [www.redcross.org.au/bushfire-grants-questions](http://www.redcross.org.au/bushfire-grants-questions)

**Applications for the re-establishment grant close 31 August 2020.** To apply or for more information call 1800 733 276 or visit [www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/recovering-from-emergencies/grants](http://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/recovering-from-emergencies/grants).

## Victorian Bushfire Concessional Loans

Concessional Loans of up to \$500,000 provide fire-affected primary producers, small businesses, and not-for-profits with concessional loans to help them in their recovery efforts.

These loans are intended for primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profits who have suffered significant damage to their assets and/or a significant loss of income as a direct result of the bushfires.

For further information contact [governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au](mailto:governmentservices@ruralfinance.com.au) or call 1800 260 425.

**Applications close on 31 August 2020.**

## Financial Counselling and Support

Financial counsellors are available from AgBiz Assist to provide advice on financial matters, available grants, help with applications and support accessing concessional loans. This includes help applying for the \$75,000 primary producers grant and the \$10,000 small business and primary producers grant.

Call 1300 834 775 to arrange a free, independent and confidential over-the-phone appointment. Free financial counselling also continues to be provided through:

- AgBiz Assist: 1300 834 775 [info@agbizassist.org.au](mailto:info@agbizassist.org.au)
- Anglicare: 1800 244 323
- Small Business Victoria: 1800 413 828

## Bushfire Rate Relief Package

Residents and businesses will have now received their latest Rate Instalment Notice. The notice will display any eligible Bushfire Rate Relief that has been automatically credited to your account.

If you believe the extent of damage to your property has been recorded incorrectly, or if you are facing financial hardship, please contact Council to discuss alternative arrangements, including interest free deferment and instalment plans.

Full details at [www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfireraterelief](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfireraterelief) or call Council's Property and Rates Team on (02) 6071 5100 or email [info@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@towong.vic.gov.au).

## Planning and building Rebuilding Homes and Businesses

When people lose their home during a bushfire, providing access to temporary housing is a vital step towards recovery.

Clause 52.07 of the Towong Shire Planning Scheme allows people to set up a temporary dwelling on their land without a planning permit. The clause also applies to damaged or destroyed businesses.

There are still some things you will need to do before you can set up a temporary dwelling.

For more information, visit: [www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/bushfire-protection/rebuilding-and-recovery](http://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/bushfire-protection/rebuilding-and-recovery).

## Requirements

While planning and building approval costs for bushfire affected applications have been waived, permits are still required on all structures to comply with State Government legislation.

Building approvals cover structural integrity and may include sheds, pool fencing, possibly even cubby houses. Planning approvals concern land use and the impact on the surrounding environment. Both approvals are needed, even if you are rebuilding a shed.

Residents are reminded that all sheds require a planning permit, even if they are simply replacing an old shed. All sheds need to be looked at as new builds and State Government legislation requires a planning permit. You may not get insurance if it's not done properly, and it could become a headache when you sell.

Residents are advised that rebuilding is exempt from advertising, as long as conditions are met. Council is working to streamline building and planning fire recovery applications and site inspections. However, residents are asked to keep in mind that some aspects may take longer including flooding overlays or land inundation overlays. Planning and building approval costs for bushfire affected applications have been waived though there may still be some costs for those using private consultants.

To talk through your planning and building requirements, speak to Council's Planner, Elke Cummins by calling 1800 518 222 or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au). Further information is also available at [www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery).



Thick fog isn't enough to keep BlazeAid volunteers down

## Replacing Tanks

In most cases a planning permit is not needed for water tanks and fees have also been waived for installation of septic tanks. Land capability assessments for septic tanks are now taking place. For more information contact a Council Planner, call 1800 518 222 or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).

## Agriculture Victoria Recovery Support

Agriculture Victoria continues to support on-farm recovery for fire affected producers across the North East. Farmers can access technical support on a range of recovery issues such as: animal health, nutrition and feed budgeting; grazing and pasture management; farm water planning and management, livestock water quality, irrigation systems and management; soil erosion management; and farm planning.

For more information contact Kylie Macreadie, Agriculture Recovery Manager on 0428 975 728 or email [kylie.macreadie@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:kylie.macreadie@agriculture.vic.gov.au). You can also find the contact details for relevant staff members at [agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au).



Picture: Blazeaid volunteers continue their work in the Towong Shire helping to rebuild burnt fencing.

## Grocon Clean-Up Program

Property cleanups in the Upper Murray are well underway and gathering pace. As at 7 July 2020, of 189 properties that required cleanup in Towong Shire, work has started on 151 (79.9 per cent) and 134 (70.9 per cent) have been completed.

Registrations for the free bushfire clean-up program closed on June 30, but if you still need bushfire

clean-up and you weren't able to register please email [connect@brv.vic.gov.au](mailto:connect@brv.vic.gov.au) or call 1800 560 760 to discuss your situation and the options available.



## Burnt Fencing Wire Pickup

Burnt fencing wire pickup is about to commence at no cost to affected property owners.

To register and arrange collection, contact the Recovery Team on 1800 518 222 or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au). You will need to include your name, an approximate number of cubic metres, address and phone number.

Fencing wire will need to be free from any non-metal materials. The fence wire stack/ collection area needs to be well clear of overhead wires and relatively flat with good access for a truck and excavator. The collection area may be on the landholder's property but must meet these requirements where-ever situated.

Wherever possible, the wire will be recycled.

Remember there are also free drop off locations available

### **Corryong Transfer Station, Sugarloaf Road.**

- Open Thursday 3-5pm and Sunday 12-4pm.

### **Walwa, Campbell Lane. End of Campbell Lane, off the Murray River Road**

- Access between 7am-6pm Monday to Friday, or 9am-4pm on weekends. Strictly for fencing only.

## Other Waste

Council Landfill and Transfer Stations are open, with physical distancing in place.

### **Corryong Transfer Station**

- Sugarloaf Road. Open Thursday 3-5pm, Sunday 12-4pm

### **Tallangatta Transfer Station**

- Hardy's Road. Open Thursday 3-5pm, Sunday 12-4pm

# Recovery Contacts

## Support Hotlines and Websites

Speak to someone by calling:

**Bushfire Counselling** | 1300 514 811

**Corryong Health** | 02 6076 3200

**Tallangatta Health** | 02 6071 5200

**Family Violence 1800 RESPECT 24/7** | 1800 737 732

**Albury Wodonga Mental Health Triage**

**Line 24/7** | 1300 104 211

**Lifeline Bushfire Helpline** | 13 43 57

**MensLine Australia** | 1300 789 978

**Beyond Blue** | 1300 224 636

Or visit:

**DHHS** | [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19)

**Australian Red Cross** | [www.redcross.org.au/stories/covid-19](http://www.redcross.org.au/stories/covid-19)

**Beyond Blue** | [www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au)

**Phoenix Australia Centre for post-traumatic mental health** | [www.phoenixaustralia.org/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.phoenixaustralia.org/coronavirus-covid-19/)

## Towong Shire Bushfire Recovery Team

### Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub

**Phone:** 1800 518 222 (Monday to Friday 9am-4pm)

**Email:** [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au)

**Website:** [www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/towong.shire.council](https://facebook.com/towong.shire.council)

### Local Area Recovery Officers

If you are yet to speak to your Local Area Recovery Officer, reach out directly:

**Kaye Nankervis** | 0436 445 187

**Pete Dikschei** | 0428 950 739

## Bushfire Recovery Victoria

**Free Helpline:** 1800 560 760

**Email:** [connect@brv.vic.gov.au](mailto:connect@brv.vic.gov.au)

**Website:** [www.brv.vic.gov.au](http://www.brv.vic.gov.au)

## Share Your Story

To share a story or contribute an update on your community recovery, contact **1800 518 222** or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).