

Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

August 2020



DISCLAIMER: All pictures were taken before mask wearing was mandatory.

Getting on with business

Mel Bye knew that if she wanted to stay in business, she needed to move forward, but how? She began as a massage therapist, hence the name Treat it Naturally, but over time her business became more about homewares, clothing and gifts. "I wasn't sure how to move ahead," Mel said. "I had lots of ideas in my head, but I never put them out there."

Then she met Chris Westwood who works for the Australian Industry Group to deliver the Federal Government's Entrepreneurs' Program, Strengthening Business. She says working with Chris has made her more accountable to her business. The Strengthening Business program was setup to respond to communities affected by the bushfires with Chris based at the Recovery Hub in Corryong.

"I spend time with businesses, discuss where they are at and where they've come from," Chris said, "then I can determine their aspirations and focus and set up a roadmap, or business plan of sorts, to set out three, six or 12-month targets. That could be anything from improving your marketing and social media presence to increasing the size of your production."

Mel was able to speak at length about social media and technology skills she felt were letting her down. Mel says she's becoming more efficient and finding simple solutions. "The focus and direction are awesome. I'd never used a spreadsheet before," she said. "I did everything on my phone. Chris is big on metrics, knowing who my customers are, where they are and how they know about my business. I needed to find out more about my customer base and focus on what draws people. I feel I can do this now, with his support."

If you would like to talk about your business, contact Chris on 0401 266 960 or email chris.westwood@ep.industry.gov.au.

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.

Subscribe Today

To subscribe to the digital newsletter, email recovery@towong.vic.gov.au.

For past editions of this newsletter go to www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery.

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.



Andrew Lees, Co-ordinator Resilience and Recovery Projects

Tell us a little about yourself

I am a long-term resident of Bellbridge and grew up by Lake Hume. Prior to taking on this role I was working in operations management for a non-government organization called WaterAid based in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. In other periods of my career I have worked in crisis prevention for the United Nations in Geneva, in the Australian Public Service in Canberra, and for CARE International in Laos. I enjoy volunteering and have a history with the State Emergency Service in Perth, and the Australian Red Cross in Melbourne.

Tell us a little about your role

My role is focused on providing project management and strategic support to all areas of the recovery team. I will also be playing an active role in data analysis, grant management and reporting. We are lucky to have an

amazingly resilient and proactive community in the North East, and I am looking forward to capitalising on the good work that has been completed so far.

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

I love big picture thinking and I am driven by the desire to make real and tangible change. The scale of the 2020 bushfire season resulted in an enormously complex response and recovery operation. I am looking forward to taking a bite out of these major challenges and ensuring the support flows to the local communities and individuals most affected.

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

My partner and family are enormously supportive. Seeing the community benefit from our work is, of course, the ideal incentive to keep pushing ahead. If those options don't work, I head up to Café Corryong Brew for an extra strong coffee.

What have you learned so far?

That bushfire recovery is a process with many moving parts each with an important role to play.

Something you are proud of?

I am proud of all those people in the community I have spoken with who are quietly offering their support to those around them without expectation of anything in return.

COVID-19 Restrictions

The latest Covid-19 restrictions mean the Recovery Hub in Corryong is now closed to public drop-in visits. People can still receive support via direct contact on the Recovery line 1800 518 222 and via email recovery@towong.vic.gov.au.

Local Area Recovery Officers (LAROs) are still there to help you, just not face-to-face until restrictions are lifted.

- Pete Dikschei – Thowgla, Towong, Biggara | 0428 950 739
- Kaye Nankervis – Walwa, Mt Alfred, Guys Forest, Pine Mountain, Tintalra | 0436 445 187
- Tony Irwin – Colac Colac, Cudgewa, Berringama/Lucyvale | 0427 869 019
- Jai Edwards – Corryong, Nariel, business community | 0438 762 442

Finding the Right Grants

Grants programs can be as confusing as they are welcome so to simplify the process, Peter Williams, Chief Executive at Deloitte Digital, has made it easier. Peter is one of Australia's leading digital influencers and has designed the Bushfire Support Finder app.

Instead of scrolling through websites trying to find out which grants you may be eligible for, the app does this for you in a couple of simple steps. By clicking on a few details, the app will tell you which grants you may qualify for and link you to the relevant website.

To find out more about the app go to www2.deloitte.com/au/bushfire.

For those without internet access, call the Recovery Hub and we can help.

Community Recovery is in Your Hands

The development of Community Recovery Committees is well-underway as Upper Murray residents take the reins on community-driven recovery.

The Upper Murray Community Recovery Committee will consider the entire region, including cross-border communities, and bigger vision projects, e.g. tourism.

Local CRCs in the small towns and valleys will decide on projects to benefit their own areas. Meetings have now been held in Cudgewa, Towong, Thowgla and Walwa and are being planned for Biggara and Tintalra.

Mayor David Wortmann said it would not be a short-term process and the Council was in for the long haul to support the process.

Veteran of the 2009 Marysville fire, Tony Thompson has been working with Bushfire Recovery Victoria and attending as many of the meetings as he can to offer advice and share from his extensive lived-experience.

"I survived the fires, then I had to survive recovery," Tony said. "It takes time to sort things out. The benefit of a CRC is looking at what you need to feel safe, to progress and move on."

"The themes are always similar in any disaster all over Australia. Healing takes time, but having a CRC means you are in charge. Council and BRV are there to help."

"Take advantage of them and the access to funds to repair, rebuild and add to your town. Don't be shy about taking advantage of opportunities."

If you would like to know more about CRCs, call your Local Area Recovery Officer at the Recovery Hub.

A Comforting Gesture for a Chilly Winter

It's been a mammoth effort as ladies from across Australia lovingly stitched more than 500 quilts for people in bushfire impacted regions.

Of those, 492 delivered to Corryong and Walwa are being initially distributed to all primary and pre-school children. The charity behind their work is Oz Comfort Quilts, coordinated by Jan MacFadyen who lives in Melbourne.

Jan brought the quilts to Corryong hoping those who had been traumatised by the fires find comfort in a quilt made by hand and with love.

On behalf of the Upper Murray community, thank you for caring.



ABOVE: Students from Corryong Kindergarten with their quilts.

Rebuild Support Service Up and Running

To support people to rebuild Towong Shire, in partnership with Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV), is providing a rebuild support service.

The free service offers information, guidance and support throughout the rebuilding process, including help with planning and building approval.

Any landowner in Towong Shire rebuilding after fire damaged their property, is eligible.

In total, 117 dwellings were destroyed or damaged to an extent that people could not remain living in them.

Extension to Primary Producer Grant

The Victorian and Commonwealth Government announced a major extension to the \$75,000 grants for directly-affected primary producers, so more people are able to receive support.

The grant – which almost 400 primary producers have successfully applied for to date, sharing over \$26 million in funds – has also been extended to 31 December 2020.

If you would like to find out more, or need help applying, call the Recovery Hub on 1800 518 222.

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

Standby, Support after Suicide 24/7 | 0439 173 310

Headspace | 1800 650 890

Or visit:

DHHS | www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19

Australian Red Cross | www.redcross.org.au/stories/covid-19

Beyond Blue | www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Phoenix Australia Centre for post-traumatic mental health | 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

Website: www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery

Facebook: facebook.com/towong.shire.council

Local Area Recovery Officers

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

Pete Dikschei – Thowgla, Towong, Biggara | 0428 950 739

Kaye Nankervis – Walwa, Mt Alfred, Guys Forest, Pine Mountain, Tintalra | 0436 445 187

Tony Irwin – Colac Colac, Cudgewa, Berringama/Lucyvale | 0427 869 019

Jai Edwards – Corryong, Nariel, business community | 0438 762 442

Bushfire Recovery Victoria

Free Helpline: 1800 560 760

Email: connect@brv.vic.gov.au

Website: www.brv.vic.gov.au



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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.