

Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

Edition 9 - November 2020

Young people being heard in recovery

Youth worker Errol Obran (*pictured below*) has spent the past seven years working with the Upper Murray's young people, at Sacred Heart School and Corryong Neighbourhood Centre.

Now, in his role with CNC, Errol is leading the Youth Working Group as part of the bushfire recovery process.

His younger sister, Quinn has jumped on board to help, using her connections to try to involve other young people in the process.

Determined to do what she can, Quinn, 19, (*pictured right*) has also joined YACVic (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria) and says the youth voice is being valued at state level.

YACVic's Rural Youth Projects coordinator, Carla Hall travelled from East Gippsland to Corryong last month to talk to members of the Youth Working Group.



"It was good to have someone, from somewhere different, acknowledge our small group in Corryong, to want our input and to know what we're up to," Quinn said. "We've done a lot of work together since, and our big focus is on mental health."

"After the fires they put the counsellors out, but no-one really knew how they were feeling, no-one knew how to talk about it, and there was no follow up counselling."

"Teachers, parents and kids - no-one knew how to acknowledge their own emotions and how to process that, let alone anyone else's emotions."

Now YACVic is working with the group to build skills, capacity and to mentor young people here, as they are doing with youth across Victoria. The Red Cross is also contributing a one-off wellbeing session.

"Everyone has a story, and we need to get that across to people," Quinn said. "It's hard to encourage people that their experiences are important, that theirs is part of the bigger story of what happened, but we need to talk about the fires, and how it affected all of us."

To contact the Youth Working Group, email Errol at youthspace@corryongnc.org or call Corryong Neighbourhood Centre on 6076 2176.

LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM

The first round of the Australian and Victorian Government's Local Economic Recovery (LER) grant program (Local Community Stream) has now closed. Grants from Round 1 will be awarded soon. There is no need to worry about missing out! Future rounds are planned, with Round 2 opening in March 2021.

Visit www.br.vic.gov.au for more information.

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.

Keryn Sheather, Customer Service Officer, Upper Murray Recovery Hub

Tell us a little about yourself

I moved to Corryong 20 years ago. I was raised on a mixed farm at Culcairn and attended Albury High School by train, the trusty Rail Motor.

I am married to Bernie and between us we have four grown children. I have volunteered for various organisations since coming to Corryong including; the Upper Murray Netball Association, Bringenbrong RFS as Treasurer, and Man From Snowy River Bush Festival as Street Parade Manager.

I love genealogy, gardening, trivia and reading. I miss visiting and camping with our kids. I miss visiting friends, wineries, restaurants, and travelling. I miss our kids, their partners, grand-dogs and grand-horse.

Tell us a little about your role

My role is Customer Service Officer, the old-fashioned receptionist, meet and greet and answer the phone. As Customer Service Officer I am usually on the other end of the phone when you call. I am a confidential ear, working closely with Local Area Recovery Officers (LAROs) to connect you with the support you need.

I started in my position when the Recovery Hub opened in early February. I have witnessed the best and worst of human nature since the fires. Thankfully, more good than bad. It is amazing how a bucket full of flowers can turn a really awful experience into a great day - proof that empathy really does go such a long way.

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

I am passionate about giving back to a community that welcomed me when I first moved to the area, and seeing our community thrive as our area has so much potential.

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

I enjoy a challenge or possibly I am stubborn. I believe we must show the younger generations how to be resilient.

What have you learned so far?

Recovery is hard. We are fortunate to have so much support available to share with those who can do with a hand.

Something you are proud of?

Our team at the Recovery Hub. We are all there for the right reasons – we want to assist our residents and community get as much help and assistance as we possibly can. I loved that a lot of our locals, when offered help or assistance, said no to help as there were others to help that were worse off than them, even though mostly they were among the worst cases.



A special thank you

Upper Murray gardeners were in Margaret Hatty's heart when she painstakingly collected and potted hundreds of succulents from her garden in Tocumwal.

Mrs Hatty and her son Doug (*pictured*) made the six-hour round trip earlier this month to deliver the plants to the Recovery Hub and the Lions Club of Corryong.



From around the ridges

Exciting news from Tintalra CRC which received a \$26,000 grant from the Veteran's Branch of the Victorian Government. The grant is to provide seating and signage on the **Avenue of Honour**, a priority project to remember Tintalra residents who served in WWI and WWII.

Towong CRC has received a \$5,000 Community Grant to buy a **community quick-fill pump** for fire response. They have also been donated a 8kva generator by the **Rotary Club of Corryong** for use during extended power outages, allowing residents to cook, charge devices and fill water bottles at the Towong Hall. Biggara Valley is compiling a comprehensive contact list after communications proved to be a major concern. The CRC is planning a **Biggara Valley Christmas Tree** and Fire Recovery Event on Saturday, December 19.

Nariel Valley CRC is **planning free community barbeques** every month at the CFA shed. They recently bought 30 hand-held radios to distribute to local households, thanks to a donation from the **Rebuild Upper Murray Go-Fund-Me** page. Berrigama/Lucyvale CRC also bought hand-held radios for 11 of its residents and have applied for funding for more.

Cudgewa CRC organised a **community treasure hunt** this month, along with the CFA, and it was a great success. A Christmas party is being organised for December 11 at the hotel.

More community recovery projects in Towong Shire

Councils and community groups across Victoria's bushfire-affected areas will share in over \$1 million in grants to support seven more projects that are vital for recovery, resilience, service delivery and community pride.

Recipients community service organisations grants include AgBiz Assist Ltd – a not-for-profit working with farm owners in the North East of Victoria – who received \$550,000 for the organisation's Reseeding the Upper Murray Farms Recovery Project, supporting farmers to re-seed properties and improve farm productivity and sustainability.

A grant for community facilities is also available. Successful applications for the community facilities grant include:

- \$37,450 for a back-up power supply to the Corryong Youth Hall to support the community in an emergency
- \$7,000 to repair the Anglican Parish of Corryong's church hall.

Further funding is available under the two grant streams, jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments as part of the \$86 million Community Recovery Package. To see more or apply, see the community grants available at www.br.vic.gov.au/financial-support.

Are You Boggled Mate?

Mary O'Brien: "It's like being bogged, sometimes you can pull yourself out and sometimes you can't".

Mary is an agronomist from Dalby in Queensland who founded *Are You Boggled Mate?* after losing two mates to drought-related suicide. She has spent her life working in rural and remote Australia and says there's a disconnect in the way depression is being communicated to country men. Her second language is agriculture, her third is "bloke", and she's coming to the Upper Murray to talk to locals in a way that no-one else can.

Are You Boggled Mate? helps rural blokes talk about mental health, suicide and the 'mongrel black dog'. She relates depression to getting bogged in the mud - it might just be a sticky patch where you need low range or a winch to pull you out, but what happens when you get properly bogged – when you aren't going to get out of this one easily?

"Country blokes are facing challenges like never before, but it doesn't mean you need to get stuck in the mud," Mary said. "There are plenty of places to go to get a tow, and it takes guts to admit you're bogged. We're making sure you're connected to the right hands to pull you out."

Tell Your Mates, Bring Your Son

Mary is being brought to the Upper Murray by Corryong Baptist Church in conjunction with All Saints Anglican Church and will speak at two events.

A free roast dinner is for the men only and you are encouraged to bring your sons (15 and older). At a free lunch for women, Mary will talk about "why your men don't open up to you".

BYO drinks, bring an esky or fridge space is available. This event is dependent on Queensland borders restrictions being eased on November 30, but for now, save the date. Numbers are limited to 100 under COVID rules.

When: Friday, December 11

Time: 7pm for men and 12 noon for women

Where: Youth Club Hall, Donaldson St, Corryong

Cost: Free for everyone, BYO drinks

RSVP: Essential for catering and COVID planning, phone or text 0438 681 829 or email boggedmate@gmail.com

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:

Tanya Aramini – 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

Agriculture Victoria (Recovery)

Phone: 0428 975 728

About This Newsletter

This fortnightly 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.

Please note: All photos in this newsletter were taken in compliance with COVID-19 regulations.