

# Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

Edition 12 - February 2021



## Wild fish healthy in Upper Murray creeks

There's good news emerging from the Upper Murray's creeks.

North East Catchment Management Authority and Victoria's Arthur Rylah Institute have been investigating the waterways and the health of fish in Cudgewa, Nariel and Thowgla creeks.

Genetic samples were taken from all captured fish to compare future catches with natural recruitment versus stocking efforts.

All creeks showed some sign of recovery or survival of wild fish, including Brown Trout and Murray Cod. Numbers are extremely low, but the fish are there and in excellent condition.

All waterways appeared to have abundant food for fish, including macro-invertebrates, yabbies and shrimp.

## Happy Sad Man

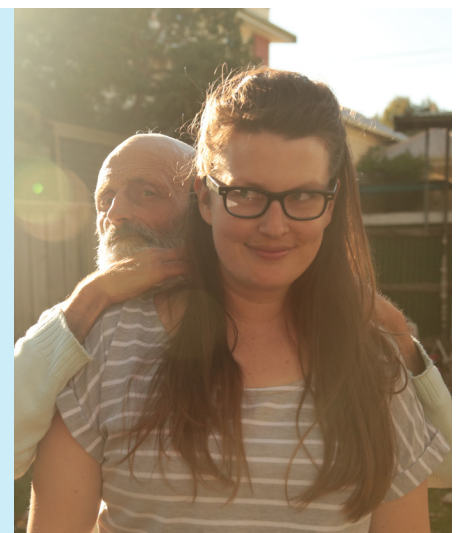
Following on from last year's *Are You Bugged Mate?* sessions in Corryong, which shone a light on depression and men's mental health, a documentary film, screening in Cudgewa on March 5, is changing the dialogue around masculinity and its vulnerability.

*Happy Sad Man* is about opening up and gaining insight in to how we can better be there for ourselves, for our mates and our loved ones.

The film is touching, funny and tender while it explores hope, anxiety, joy and darkness. It laughs and cries alongside five very different men, including John Anderson from Cudgewa. It's raw emotion will inspire you to hold the men in your life that bit closer. The 2018 film was produced by Australian filmmaker, Genevieve Bailey, who's films have screened in 50 countries and won more than 30 awards.

Held at Cudgewa Football Club, the event starts with dinner at 7.30 before an 8.30 screening then Q&A with Ms Bailey. Tickets are free. To book your spot, go to [www.happysadman.com.au/screenings](http://www.happysadman.com.au/screenings).

*Pic: John Anderson and Genevieve Bailey. Pic credit: Henrik Nordstrom*



**Recovery grants are still available.**

**Check out the Focus on Grants section on page 7 for more information.**

## **Changes afoot at the Recovery Hub**

The Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub said good-bye to Andrew Lees and Eden Cook in January. We thank them for their work.

Council also welcomed Jenelle Williamson as Manager Recovery and Bevan Klein as Recovery Project Manager who will work on priority infrastructure projects.

In response to evolving community priorities, Jai Edwards has taken on the role of Acting Recovery Events Officer and is available to offer advice and direction to the community regarding upcoming events.

The Local Area Recovery Officers (LARO) have been restructured with Tanya Aramini working with Biggara and Thowgla, Kaye Nankervis working with Corryong, Towong, Tintalra and Walwa and Tony Irwin with Cudgewa, Berringama/Lucyvale and Nariel Valley.

## **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.

### **Tony Irwin, Local Area Recovery Officer, Cudgewa, Berringama Lucyvale and Nariel Valley**

#### **Tell us a little about yourself**

I returned to live and retire in the Upper Murray 18 months ago after having lived here 20 years ago. I moved to Wangaratta and then the Goulburn Valley leading up to retirement. With my partner Keran Stewart, I recently completed a home renovation and extension in Cudgewa- the place we now call home. Like so many of you, we experienced the horrendous fires of 2019/2020 and now want to contribute in any way we can for the recovery of this magnificent Upper Murray.



#### **Tell us a little about your role**

In late July, I started working at the Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub as a Local Area Recovery Officer for Council. My role is to liaise closely with the Community Recovery Committees at Cudgewa, Berringama/Lucyvale and Nariel Valley. I also assist the residents of Colac Colac area with any needs that may arise or advice sought. We are often a sounding board for individuals, we follow up with grants for recovery, and focus on welfare and well-being.

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

The thing I focus most on is to get everyone "over the line". The fires and destruction impacted on everyone differently – hence making everyone's recovery needs different. If we work now and into the future to address personal and community needs, with a united front, we will get there.

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

To beat the odds and get a favourable result for all involved. One of my football coaches once told me "you make your own luck". That's very close to the truth and we now have a chance to make our own luck and decide our new future.

#### **What have you learned so far?**

A fire event of this magnitude has left us searching for answers and ideas in so many areas. Some can happen quickly, and others of a more complex nature will take time. I have learned to identify priorities with committees and stay focused to achieve results. You can never say never, but you can plan and work to reduce the impact of future disasters.

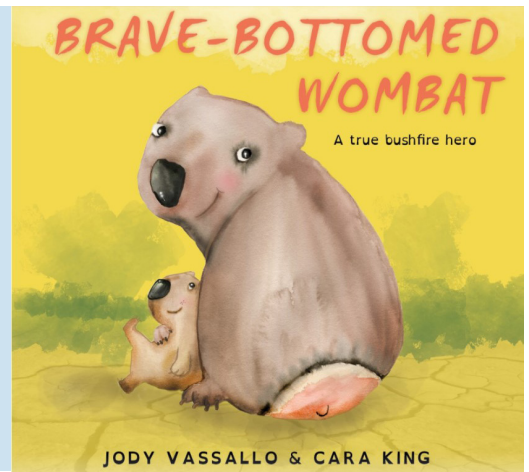
#### **Something you are proud of?**

- Helping community members to help remove unnecessary pressures from them as they rebuild their lives and communities.
- The co-operative and tight knit group I work with at the Upper Murray Recovery Hub in Corryong. I can only describe them as passionate and selfless in their dealings with our community.
- We all have to be proud of so many people who did so much on the nights and days of the fires – great community spirit.

## New children's book helps to process feelings after bushfires

Inspired by real-life memories, there is a new book helping children understand and deal with bushfires. Author and Rural Fire Service volunteer, Jody Vassallo is from Tilba in NSW. She wrote *The Brave-bottomed Wombat* after her own experience answering questions from children about animals and what they do during a bushfire.

A percentage of the book's sales will go towards Firesticks, an organisation that practices cultural burning using Indigenous land management techniques to protect against future bushfires. You can purchase the book at [www.chuffed.org/project/bravewombat](http://www.chuffed.org/project/bravewombat).



## Second grant to help secure electricity supply and reliability

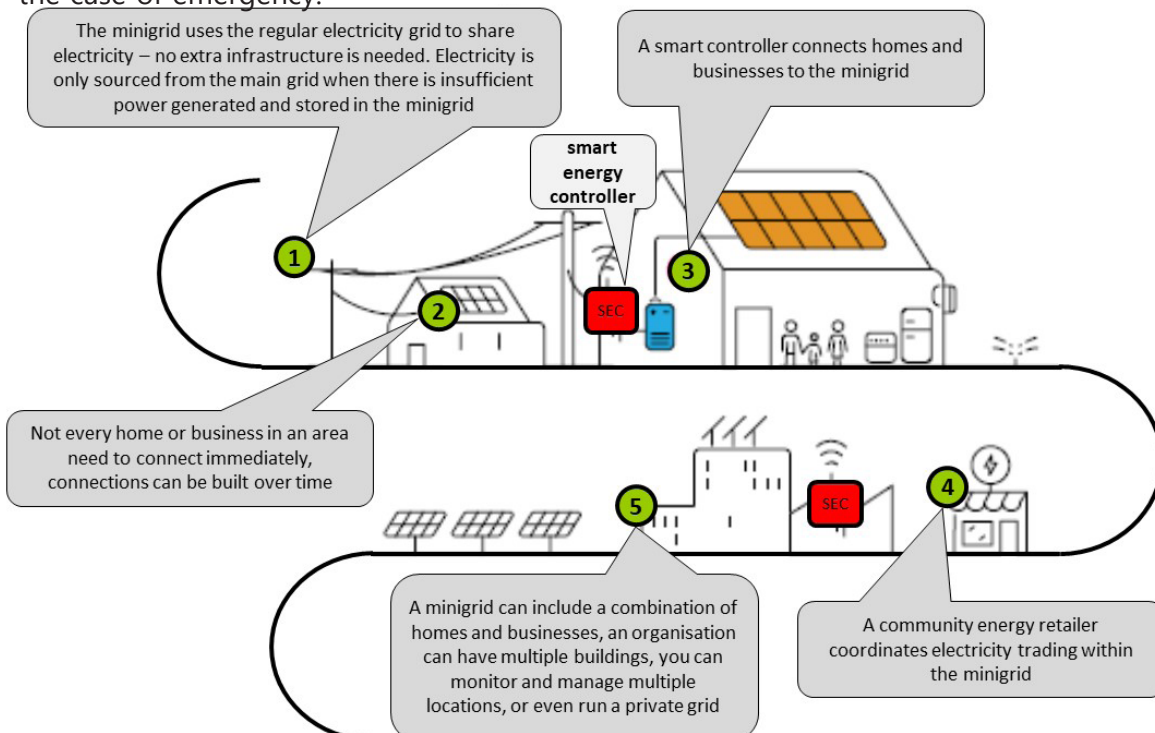
A joint plan to secure a renewable electricity supply in the Upper Murray, and reduce running costs, has received a \$2.17 million boost. Upper Murray Inc (UMI) and Beechworth-based Indigo Power worked on the plan and were successful in their joint application for a Recovery Regional Economic Stimulus and Resilience Grant this month through the Local Economic Recovery (LER) program. UMI Deputy Chair, Ian Cesa said they had already received a \$800,000 Local Economic Recovery grant to cover solar panels on public buildings. This second grant will allow them to begin developing micro grids using community-scale batteries up to 300kWh.

Indigo Power, a community-owned energy company and certified social enterprise, will deliver the project in the Upper Murray over the next two years. CEO, Ben McGowan said the initial grant was about protecting power supply to critical assets like ambulance stations, banks, fuel and CFA sheds in the case of emergency.

The second grant allows for a battery system with backup generator. "This allows us to think a bit bigger and recognise how we can improve electricity supply and reliability across the Upper Murray," he said. "Being at the end of the line from Wodonga, it is vulnerable. This won't solve the problem but will start addressing it. The aim is to manage the grid within a range. By sensibly managing electricity supply we may not be so reliant on grid upgrades.

"The Upper Murray community has done some really detailed thinking about what they want to do to secure the electricity supply. The end point, perhaps in 10 years, will be a really good micro grid, which secures supply, provides resilience and keeps money in this community."

The \$68.6 million LER program is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments and funds local projects vital for community recovery, stimulating the economy and boosting jobs and industry across bushfire-affected regions. The second round of the LER Local Community Projects grants opens in March. Learn more in the Focus on Grants section on page 7.



## FUN FACT

Did you know the peak pressure on electricity demand is at 1am when the off-peak hot water rate kicks in?

## Red Cross' ongoing recovery program

Recovery is a journey measured in years, not weeks or months. It goes beyond finances or rebuilding, and includes people's sense of hope and self-worth, family security and community cohesion.

This is why the Red Cross recovery program will run to 2022 and beyond. Red Cross aims to help individuals cope with trauma and access support, and communities to heal and strengthen their connections during the recovery process.

Red Cross has a recovery footprint in 46 local government areas, including Towong Shire, with recovery officers living and working in bushfire affected communities and supported by trained volunteers.

Bushfire Recovery Officers, like Jessica Davison (pictured) who has been on the ground in Towong Shire for the past year, serve as eyes and ears on the ground. Each month they prepare a thematic analysis of emerging issues.



"This enables us to advocate on behalf of the communities we serve, through targeted services, events or funding and working with Community Recovery Committees," Jessica said. "Recovery takes time, we're here for as long as it takes."

You can contact Red Cross on 1800 733 276.

## Your chance to give feedback

Upper Murray residents are encouraged to give feedback into Phase 2 of the Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season.

Tony Pearce, the Inspector-General for Emergency Management will host three initial community meetings in Walwa, Corryong and Biggara in early March.

Your views will help the independent Inquiry into Victoria's 2019/20 Fire Season identify improvements in Victoria's emergency management arrangements to support communities before, during and after emergencies.

Visits to other valleys and communities will be advised at a later date:

- **Walwa** – Monday 1 March, 6-8pm at Upper Murray River Cottages, 8680 Murray River Rd, RSVP 26 February.
- **Corryong** – Tuesday 2 March, 10am-12noon at Upper Murray Events Centre, Corryong Recreation Reserve, RSVP 26 February.
- **Biggara** – Wednesday 10 March, 11am-2pm (lunch available) at Biggara Hall, 1476 Upper Murray Rd, RSVP 5 March.
- RSVP for catering and COVID planning to [www.igem.vic.gov.au](http://www.igem.vic.gov.au) or call 03 8684 7900.

## Cudgewa Avenue of Honour

The Cudgewa Avenue of Honour is an important part of the local community. The avenue of trees was planted in 1917, in honour of 65 locals who served in WW1.

Earlier this month, community members came together with Council's Recovery Team and the Cudgewa CRC to put a plan in place for the 37 elms, some of which are in poor condition structurally and pose safety concerns after the bushfires.

A report outlining options will be tabled at the February Council meeting.



Pictured: Returned serviceman, Peter Purss at Cudgewa's Avenue of Honour.

## The Athenaeum Art Project

Part one of The Athenaeum Art Project will bring new life to an old building. A mural inspired by the Lighthouse and its connection to the Upper Murray will be painted on the wall at Bailey's Mechanical Service in Donaldson St, behind the Memorial and RSL halls.

Victorian street artist, Katie Eine will paint the mural, and veteran and war artist, Sean Burton is coordinating the team to bring it to reality. A QR code will allow visitors to find out more about the artist and the story behind the mural.

Among other materials, inspiration was drawn from a book, *Light Horsemen of the Upper Murray*, produced by teacher Steve Learmonth and students at Corryong College.

Further murals are planned around the Memorial Hall precinct along with resurfacing the car park to improve accessibility and safety to the RSL and Memorial Halls.



**Pictured: Sean Burton (front) with Cathy Ross, Margie Walker, Sheril Wilson, Honor Auchinleck, Greg Nankervis and Ken Bailey.**



**STANDING: Dominic Sandilands (Upper Murray CRC), David Braniff (Thowgla CRC), Tania Costello (Tintaldra CRC), Nicole Martin (Berringama/Lucyvale CRC), Peter Williams (Deloitte)**

**FRONT: Jenelle Williamson (Manager Recovery, Towong Shire Council), Cathy Ross (Corryong CRC chair), Sheril Wilson (Corryong CRC), Faith Damm (Biggara CRC), Janice Newnham (Walwa CRC)**

## CRC dinner

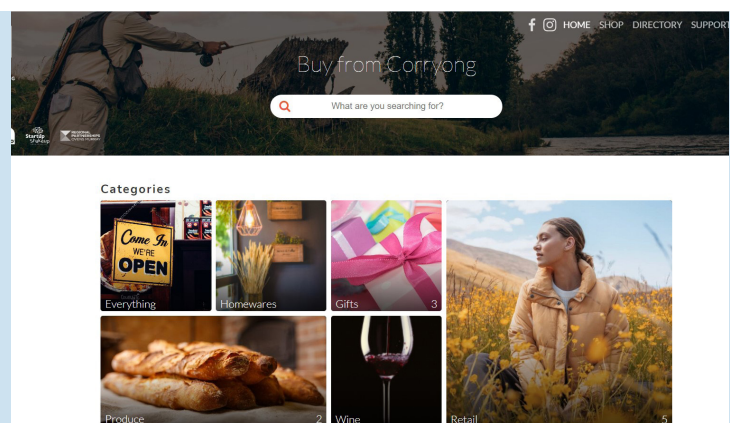
Community Recovery Committee chairs met for dinner in early February to connect with each other and identify opportunities to work together.

Each of them shared work they had done to date, their priorities and highlighted some of the recovery challenges their communities were facing. Conversations have also begun around events or activities to acknowledge 12 months since the bushfires.

## Buy From Corryong

A new website, which brings local businesses together and creates an online shopping experience for customers across Australia has been launched.

The website Buy from Corryong, offers easy access to local produce, homewares, gifts and more, all delivered. The project was funded by Ovens Murray Regional Partnership and developed in partnership with Startup Shakeup North East Vic and Towong Shire Council ([www.buyfromcorryong.com.au](http://www.buyfromcorryong.com.au)).



## Have your say on Corryong CBD revitalisation

Council is applying for funding to make upgrades to the Corryong Central Business District (CBD). We would like to hear what changes you would like to see included in any future upgrades.

Your feedback and ideas will be used to inform a draft design plan to submit with the funding application. If the funding application is successful, community members will again have the chance to provide feedback and help finalise the plans.

Share your ideas by taking the survey. Visit [www.towong.vic.gov.au/survey](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au/survey), visit the Customer Service Centre in Corryong or call 1300 365 222.



## Free property numbering

Register before 1 April for free property numbering for all rural properties in the Upper Murray.

The small reflective signs, with a number and green band, will make it easier for emergency services to find rural properties at night and in poor visibility.

You will need to provide your name, address and property number, which may be different from your address.

Numbers are available to properties outside Corryong, Cudgewa central and Walwa central.

If you would like to order a sign for your property, call the Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub before 1 April on 1800 518 222.



## Municipal Recovery Plan

Towong Shire's Municipal Recovery Plan was endorsed by Council at the January meeting and is available to read on the Council's website.

The plan is a developing document with actions which will continue to be adapted in line with evolving community recovery needs and priorities.

The plan outlines five core lines of recovery: natural environment and biodiversity, business and economy, health and well-being, building and infrastructure, and Aboriginal culture and healing.

An update to the Plan, scheduled to be delivered in early 2021, will seek to incorporate input and priorities from CRCs and the wider Upper Murray communities.

## FOCUS ON GRANTS

For information on these and other available grants, contact the Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub on 1800 518 222 or email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).

### Local Economic Recovery (LER) Local Community Project Grants Stream (up to \$2 million)

Round Two of the LER Local Community Projects grants will open 15 March 2021, with \$14.6 million available for projects that support local recovery projects that build a sense of community pride and connectedness. BRV can discuss your proposal with you.

The project must directly benefit one or more local communities within a fire-affected region. The funding program is open to Community Recovery Committees, private businesses, industry groups, not-for-profits and LGAs. Closing 12 April, 2021.

The first round of the LER Local Community Project grants, announced late last year, included funding for key community projects such as refurbishing the Towong Soldiers Memorial Hall, upgrading the Walwa Services Memorial Hall and upgrading the courts at the Corryong Tennis Club.

Call 1800 560 760, email [connect@brv.vic.gov.au](mailto:connect@brv.vic.gov.au) or visit [www.vic.gov.au/local-economic-recovery-program-bushfire-affected-communities](http://www.vic.gov.au/local-economic-recovery-program-bushfire-affected-communities) to register your interest.

### Murray PHN Grants open

After a disaster such as the 2019-20 bushfires, many people deal with memories and ongoing feelings by drawing on their own strengths, as well as the

support of others, and will gradually rebuild their lives and achieve a sense of wellbeing again.

Another round of Community Recovery Grants from Murray Primary Health Network (PHN) opened on February 8 to support wellbeing. These grants are for community groups and community organisations to deliver grassroots activities to bushfire affected areas to strengthen social connectedness and support mental health and healing.

You are invited to apply for grants of up to \$10,000. Applications close at 5pm on Friday, 12 March. For more information contact Greg Calder at Murray PHN at [gcalder@murrayphn.org.au](mailto:gcalder@murrayphn.org.au) or phone 0417 620 859.

### Gardiner Dairy Foundation Community Grants (up to \$5,000)

This grant aims to strengthen small Victorian dairy communities, helping to build their capacity to deal with local issues, and enhance existing community infrastructure. Closing 16 March, 2021. Find out more at [www.gardinerfoundation.com.au/communitygrants](http://www.gardinerfoundation.com.au/communitygrants).

### Border Trust Bushfire Relief Fund (up to \$10,000)

Health and wellbeing; Programs, events and activities with ongoing community benefit; Programs that assist regeneration of land affected by fire; Events that connect bushfire affected communities. Next round closing 30 April 2021. Find out more at [www.bordertrust.org.au/granting](http://www.bordertrust.org.au/granting)

## COMMUNITY DIARY

If you would like to have your event included in future newsletters, please email [recovery@towong.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@towong.vic.gov.au).



### March 6

*Upper Murray Farmers and Craft Market*  
Attree Park, Corryong  
9am - 12pm

### Towong Cup

Towong Racecourse  
Gates open at 11am

### Tallangatta Show

Tallangatta Showgrounds  
From 9.30am

### March 7

*Mighty Mitta Muster*  
Magura Park, Mitta  
9am

### March 28

*2021 Tournament with a Difference*  
Walwa Golf Club  
From 8am

# 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](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:

**Tanya Aramini – Thowgla, Towong, Biggara** | 0457 726 595

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

**Tony Irwin – Colac Colac, Cudgewa, Berringama Lucyvale, Nariel Valley** | 0427 869 019

## 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)

## Agriculture Victoria (Recovery)

**Phone:** 0428 975 728

## 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).

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