

Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

October 2021 | Edition 20



FOCUS ON THOWGLA CRC

The Thowgla Valley is a very picturesque area of the Upper Murray and offers a spectacular drive for those visiting the region. It extends on the southern side of Corryong and runs due south following the Thowgla Creek into Upper Thowgla and finally where cleared land finishes. If you're keen keep driving and you won't be disappointed.

The Thowgla Valley has a healthy sense of community with its economy largely based around agriculture of beef, sheep and grazing properties. It also includes many smaller acreage residential blocks located in Upper Thowgla.

Originally settled in 1880 as a result of alluvial gold being found, within a few months it was estimated that the goldfield had about 500 people, with an assortment of hastily constructed buildings that included a hotel, bakery, general store and butchery. In those early days Thowgla was known for its big timber and fertile soil of creek flats and rolling forest country, being a very attractive prospect for the early settlers to commence farming.

The 2019/20 bushfires had a major impact on the community. Almost all the Valley was directly affected or in danger of being burnt. It was the work of the local residents that halted the fire from more devastation.

Nominated by the Thowgla community, David Braniff has been at the helm of the Community Recovery Committee since the beginning.

For David, one of the benefits of CRC's was to give a voice to the broad views and to address recovery objectives of

bushfire affected communities and to liaise between the Thowgla's community, Towong Shire Council, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, community service organisations and other stakeholders.

From the initial survey the community's priorities were: the Thowgla Hall, fire preparedness, communications, natural environment and roads.

The Thowgla Hall rated very highly as a priority of the community after the fires. The Hall Committee has done an amazing job of renovating this community icon as a much loved and dedicated meeting space.

Like most communities across the Upper Murray better digital communication was also high on the agenda.

When asked what the Committee is most proud of David identified the securing of funds to purchase portable firefighting units (slip-ons) and UHF radios to be a form of emergency communication. Fire preparedness and communication were important for Thowgla's CRC so it was good to make progress in these two areas.

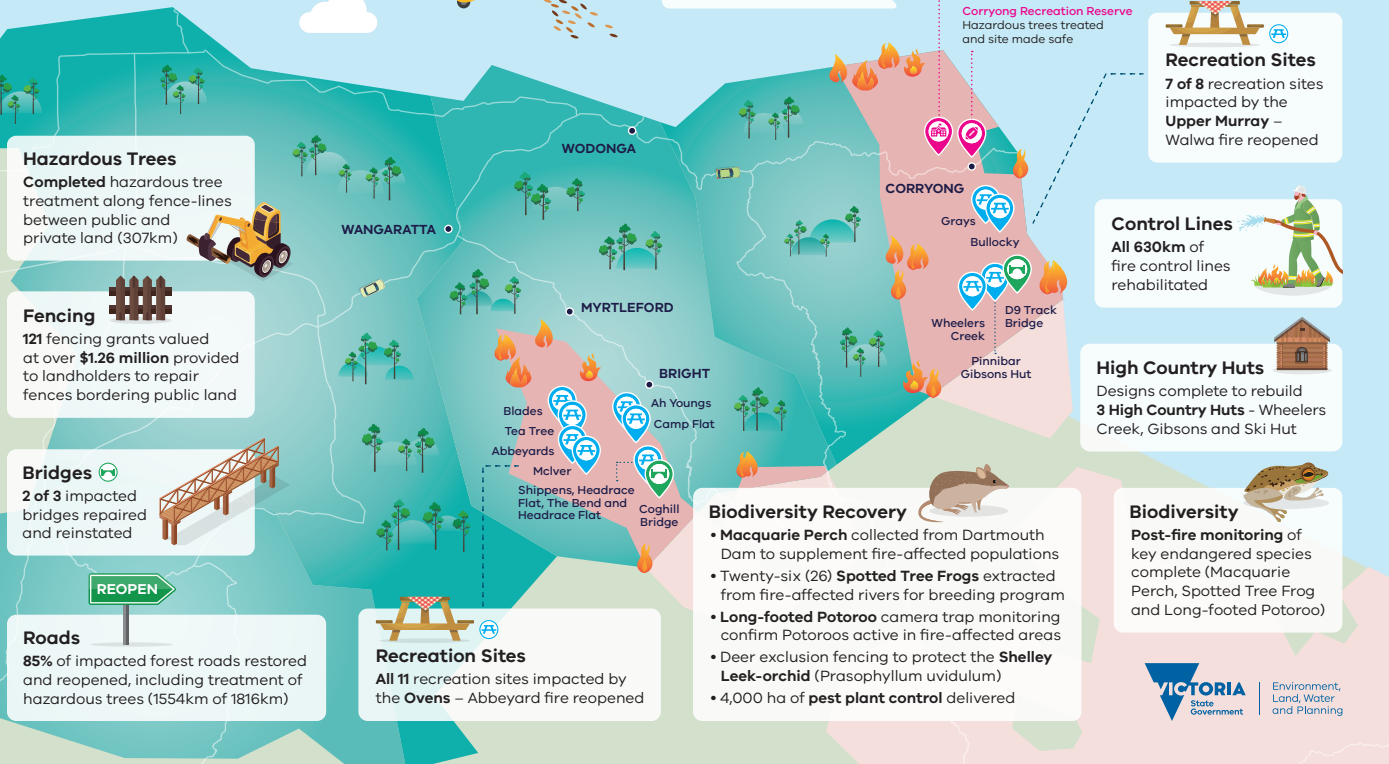
In terms of challenges, "it's been a hard slog in a world of grant applications" according to David. "Everyone has contributed a significant amount of time and we're committed to seeing the process through".

But for now, "we're looking forward to enjoying the atmosphere created by the refurbishment of the Thowgla Hall and being a more self-sufficient Valley with preparedness equipment installed and at the ready."

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

NORTH-EAST VICTORIA: FEB 2020–JUNE 2021

The 2019/20 bushfires impacted over 174,000 hectares of public land in north east Victoria, managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). This is a snapshot of our work so far to make these areas safe to access and enjoy once again.



Progress on the Municipal Recovery Plan

The Municipal Recovery Plan assists the Towong Municipal Recovery Committee, Bushfire Recovery Victoria and Council to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Municipal Recovery Plan. It also provides insight into how the recovery process is evolving and adapting in response to emerging challenges and changes, as well as the progress made in pursuing initiatives that will assist the Upper Murray to build resilience, grow and thrive in the future.

Across the five pillars of recovery the following provide a snapshot of priority next steps:

- The preparation of Community Emergency Management Plans to help communities build their own preparedness for emergencies.
- Support the mental health and wellbeing of the community through the establishment and support of a Suicide Prevention Network.
- Remain connected with families who have not commenced the rebuilding of primary residences.
- Continue to advocate for improved telecommunications services throughout the Upper Murray, including internet speed, mobile blackspots and internet access for community halls.
- Finalise the Agriculture Strategy, Economic Development Strategy and Destination Management Plan.
- Explore opportunities to increase community involvement, engagement and communications in activities such as tree planting, waterway protection, seed collection, fish restocking and Waterwatch.
- Incorporate recovery priorities for Duduroa Dhargal Traditional Owner group into the Municipal Recovery Plan.
- Development of Reconciliation Action Plans for Towong Shire Council and Corryong Health.



Community Emergency Management Plan Workshops

Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) are prepared by local communities at a “grass roots” level to build their own preparedness for emergencies. The Community Emergency Management Plan provides key information for community members and organisations in an emergency event.

The aim of each community plan is to support communities become more resilient towards the impacts of future emergencies.

With the support of Alpine Valleys Leadership Inc and Council and with funding from the Victorian Governments Community Recovery Package thirteen workshops have been delivered across the Upper Murray over the last month. With the support of facilitators Susan Benedyka and Cath Botta, Upper Murray communities have boosted both leadership and capability whilst developing these initial plans.

Completion of the initial plans is expected to be finalised November 2021 for distribution and submission to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan Committee (MEMPC) for consideration.



Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program

The Rainwater and Septic Tank Replacement Program supports households impacted by the 2019/20 Eastern Victorian Fires to have safe access to usable water, safe disposal of wastewater, and to reduce the financial burden of rebuilding.

Following the delivery of the first year of the program it was identified that there were still gaps or unmet community needs. The program has recently been updated to expand the eligibility requirements to further support community recovery from the bushfires.

The expanded support and changes to eligibility under the program include:

- Removal of the principal place of residence eligibility requirement – this allows for all impacted households to be supported in the communities of Towong and East Gippsland Shires.
- Expansion of the program to encourage not only replacement of rainwater tanks or septic systems, but to encourage new installations – this allows for impacted households to shift away from using alternative water sources (such as pumping water from a creek) towards a primary use water tank if they did not have them prior to the bushfires.
- Inclusion of rebates to cover minor works and reconnection costs for households connecting to reticulated systems to reduce the financial burden of the rebuild process. In some cases, people have moved from remote areas into towns or as part of their rebuilding will need to reconnect to the reticulated systems of their local water corporation.
- Further support to provide rebates for the installation of rainwater tanks for firefighting purposes – this supports households to install a water tank for firefighting purposes or install the appropriate outlets to their current water tank, to conform with a Bushfire Management Planning Overlay.

Support under the program will be available for work completed since the commencement of the bushfires on 21 November 2019 until 31 May 2023, to allow time for households who are rebuilding to access the rebate.

The support will be provided as a rebate payment to eligible applicants. The rebate allows for eligible households to reclaim expenses accrued, on proof of receipt, to repair, replace or install a primary use rainwater tank and/or septic system.

Rebates for primary use rainwater tanks and septic systems are available to households who are unable to connect to reticulated (water mains or sewerage) systems and require an alternative primary source of usable water and safe disposal of wastewater.

Further support is also available for households who require a water tank for firefighting purposes or need to install the appropriate outlets to an existing water tank as part of the requirement under the Bushfire Management Overlay.

To be eligible for the program you must be the owner of a home that has damage to the home, primary rainwater and/or primary septic system, which was directly caused by bushfire, as verified through the bushfire recovery clean-up process – or – a home whose primary non reticulated water supply source has been impacted by the bushfire and an alternative supply is required.

This program is delivered by Melbourne Water on behalf of the Victorian Government's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Bushfire Recovery Victoria.

Further information, including Program Guidelines and Factsheets visit Melbourne Water on: melbournewater.com.au/bushfire-rebates.



Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Program

A project to support the reliability of the Upper Murray electricity grid is being undertaken by Upper Murray incorporated in Partnership with Indigo Power. The Upper Murray Energy Resilience and Reliability project, developed with the community following the devastating 2019-20 bushfires, will move to sure-up the region's electricity supply with a focus on energy nodes, community-scale batteries and hot water pump services.

The Upper Murray Energy Reliability and Resilience Project aims to sure-up the region's electricity supply through renewable energy and generators on critical sites, community-scale batteries, and hot water heat pump services.

Recently, Project Manager Heath Shakespeare has been visiting sites and meeting with stakeholders, where solar panels, batteries and generators are to be installed to collect relevant information for grid connection approvals.

If you'd like to find out more about the project, make an appointment to meet with Heath in person on Tuesdays at the Corryong Neighbourhood Centre. Heath can be contacted on 1800 491 739 or heath@indigopower.com.au.

Resilience and Reliability project

Funded by the Victorian Government, with AusNet Services, the Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Program aims to deliver a simple microgrid to Corryong using subsidised residential solar panels, batteries, and other distributed energy resources. The objective being to improve the energy resilience of Corryong and work collaboratively with other energy programs underway in the Upper Murray. This includes Project EDGE and the Upper Murray Energy Resilience and Reliability Project (Upper Murray Inc).

The Program is seeking Corryong township residents to submit an Expression of Interest for up to 50 subsidised solar and battery systems to roll-out the simple microgrid and support increased energy resilience for the town. People across the Upper Murray are invited to share to their views regarding renewable energy solutions via the 'Have your Say,' survey.

For more information on the program and the survey contact: community.microgrids@delwp.vic.gov.au or visit engage.vic.gov.au/community-microgrids-and-sustainable-energy-program-cmse.



FOCUS ON GRANTS

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) - Strengthening Rural Communities - Round 11

\$25,000 | Closing 23 November 2021

Grants are available for a broad range of grassroots, community-led initiatives that directly and clearly benefit local communities. Delivering, or providing activities, events, programs and services. Purchasing or hiring equipment and materials. Community infrastructure projects. Organisational capacity building. Community resource development. Must be not-for-profit, community based org. with ABN or Incorporation Certificate. Must have clear public benefit. Must be in declared Fire Affected Area. One app per organisation per round.

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) - Future Drought Fund - Round 2

\$150,000 | Closing 1 November 2021

This program provides a sustainable source of funding to help remote, rural and regional communities, and farmers, become more prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of drought. The Networks to Build Drought Resilience Program is one of the Fund's foundation programs. It is designed to build community capacity by strengthening social and community networking, support, engagement and wellbeing. The aim is to build an enduring resilience to the impacts of climate change, drought, and enhance the public good in agriculture-dependent communities. Range of grant amounts available.

St Vincent de Paul Society Bushfire Community Grants

Up to \$20,000 | No specified closing date

Grants are available to organisations in bushfire-affected areas, providing funding for recovery projects that benefit multiple people. You must be a registered community group or organisation in order to apply for a grant.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications - Building Resilient Regional Leaders Initiative (Pilot)

\$5,000,000 | Closing 5pm, 5 November 2021

This initiative provides organisations with funding to support current and emerging regional leaders to further develop their leadership and resilience skills, enabling them to become strong local voices who can help sustain regional Australia's recovery from COVID-19, bushfires and other crises, and contribute to their region's long-term resilience. Delivering place based leadership training, facilitate the development of networks between current and emerging regional leaders, mentors and other experts and provide participants with opportunities and techniques to develop deeper connections within their regions.

Eastern Victorian Bushfire Rebuilding Rebate Programs

Up to \$5000 | Closing June 2023

This scheme is available to support landowners rebuild their homes that were destroyed or significantly damaged in the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian Fires in the Shires of East Gippsland and Towong. In the form of a rebate, the scheme supports the reclaiming of expenses accrued through profession planning and building permit applications.

For more grants visit:

Victorian Government

vic.gov.au/financial-support

Bushfire Support Finder

au-deloitte.neotalogic.com/a/bushfire-support-finder

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

frrr.org.au/grant_calendar.php

Grant Connect

grants.gov.au

Indi Funding Finder

helenhaines.grantguru.com.au

COMMUNITY DIARY

To add your event to the Community Diary, email recovery@towong.vic.gov.au or call the Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub on 1800 518 222.

KNIT N NATTER

2nd and 4th Tuesday each month

1.30pm - 3.30pm

Anglican Church Hall

Gold coin donation

COMMUNITY GATHERING:

ACOUSTIC MUSIC and POETRY

3rd Sunday of each month at 3pm

The Resting Place

Poets Paradise, Towong

Contact: Maurie Foun on 0429 100 279

SOCIAL INDOOR BADMINTON

Every Tuesday 10am - 12noon

Memorial Hall, Corryong

UPPER MURRAY CHALLENGE

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 November

Khancoban and Corryong

MEN'S SHED CHAT,

CUPPA AND SOCIALISE

Every Wednesday at 9am

Corryong Men's Shed, Strzelecki Way

SOCIAL CROQUET

Every Friday 10am – 12noon

All welcome, equipment provided

Corryong Bowling Club, Corryong

JOEYS, CUBS & SCOUTS

Every Thursday from 5pm

Corryong Memorial Hall

NEW DATE:

THE 2021 CORRYONG SHOW

27 November 2021

Corryong Recreation Reserve,

Strzelecki Way, Corryong

Contact: Serena Klippel on

sklippel@bigpond.net.au

LINE DANCING

Every Monday at 10am

(except school holidays)

Corryong RSL

\$5

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

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

Beyond Blue | coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Phoenix Australia Centre for post-traumatic mental health | 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: 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, Biggara | 0457 726 595

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

Tony Irwin – Colac, Cudgewa, Berringama

Lucyvale, Nariel Valley | 1800 518 222

Shea Bloom – Nariel Valley, Towong | 0428 950 739

Bushfire Recovery Victoria

Free Helpline: 1800 560 760

Email: connect@brv.vic.gov.au

Website: brv.vic.gov.au

Agriculture Victoria (Recovery)

Phone: 0428 975 728

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 towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery.

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

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.