



Newsletter #3 – REMLAW FIRE

March 25, 2009

Horsham Municipal Recovery Centre (03) 5382 9794 or email mecc.horshamrec@hrcc.vic.gov.au - Open Monday – Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm

Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240 667

Personal & Emotional Support

Wimmera Uniting Care is available for personal and family support on **1800 112 177**.

The Salvation Army can be contacted on **5382 1770 or 0438 519 742** for support and may be able to assist with sourcing household goods and personal items.

If you have been affected by the bushfires, it is important to take care of your emotional wellbeing. Sometimes, in emergencies we can overlook the day-to-day basics of looking after ourselves. If you are affected by bushfire you are encouraged to make use of Wimmera Uniting Care, your GP, clergy, or 24-hour telephone help lines – for example:

- Lifeline on **131 114**
- NURSE-ON-CALL Bushfire Health and Counselling Line on **1300 60 60 24**
- Parentline on **13 22 89**
- Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800**

NEW: Rebuilding and Recovery Grants

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has announced further payments that will be made available through its rebuilding and recovery stage. The money to assist with rebuilding **principal places of residence** and replacing contents will be allocated in this way:

- Homeowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the bushfires will receive a Rebuilding and Recovery Grant of **\$50,000**. This consists of \$35,000 for rebuilding and \$15,000 to replace contents. This grant will be made available to people rebuilding in their community or relocating.
- Tenants whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the bushfires will receive a **\$15,000** payment to cover contents lost or damaged.
- People whose principal place of residence was significantly damaged by the bushfires and who will have to relocate during rebuilding will receive a payment of **\$15,000** for repairs and rebuilding.

A further needs-based payment will also be made to homeowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the fires. ***People can register to receive more information regarding this payment by contacting the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund on 1800 180 213***

NEW: Stamp duty relief – Homes & Vehicles

The Brumby Labor Government has put in place measures to ensure stamp duty relief for those who **lost family homes or vehicles** in the fires.

The government will waive the first \$1050 of stamp duty on a vehicle for those families who had lost a vehicle in the fires. This means no stamp duty would be paid on an Australian built car like a Holden Berlina. The government may also waive the first \$21,970 of stamp duty on new homes for those who have lost a home in the recent bushfires.

This means no stamp duty would be paid on houses up to \$500,000 by people rebuilding buying a replacement existing home or rebuilding a new home on a new site. People rebuilding on their own property are currently exempt from stamp duty.

The State Revenue Office (SRO) had been instructed to assess each case on its merits to ensure that the process for obtaining both land transfer and motor vehicle stamp duty relief was as easy as possible for victims of the recent disaster.

The stamp duty waiver will not apply to commercial vehicles or properties other than a principal place of residence. Duty would not be payable on cars donated to victims in the affected areas subject to the cars meeting VicRoads requirements. The SRO has set up a special telephone line for anyone affected by the bushfires on 13 21 61.

In additional measures to take the financial burden off bushfire affected families the Brumby Labor Government will waive Land Victoria's search and registration fees and charges for title and plan searches, amending land titles, the replacement of certificates of title and the registration of new mortgages.

How do I find out about other assistance?

Other grants are available through the Department of Human Services and other agencies. For more information about these grants, contact the **Bushfire Hotline on 1800 240 667** or go to the home page of the Department of Human Services website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Additional support and services:

In addition to financial matters there may be other affairs you need to consider, such as replacing lost documentation. Below is a list of services being provided to help affected people.

Computers and communication technology

InfoXchange is coordinating the provision of free computers and communication technology to people who lost their equipment in the bushfires. Register on the InfoXchange website www.bushfirerelief.infoxchange.net.au

Land tax relief

The State Revenue Office will apply compassionate consideration for land tax relief claims to people who lost property in the bushfires. Further details are available on the State Revenue Office website www.sro.vic.gov.au/sro/SROWebSite.nsf/index1.htm or by calling 13 21 61.

Licensing and registration assistance

VicRoads are providing face to face registration and licensing advice, processing requests and issuing on the spot cash refunds to bushfire survivors through relief and recovery centres. Call VicRoads Call Centre 13 11 71 for further information.

Legal assistance

Free legal advice is available to help bushfire survivors with a range of legal issues stemming from the fires. Free legal advice will be available through a legal helpline 1800 113 432 to assist bushfire survivors with legal issues stemming from the fires. Lawyers will also be available at all operational Bushfire Relief Centres.

Replacing lost birth and marriage certificates

The Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages will help people who lost birth and marriage certificates in the fires obtain new certificates at no cost. Full details are available at The Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/bdm/home> on 1300 369 367.

Stamp duty relief

The State Revenue Office is providing stamp duty relief to those who lost non-commercial vehicles and homes in the bushfires. Further details are available on the State Revenue Office website www.sro.vic.gov.au/sro/SROWebSite.nsf/index1.htm or by calling 13 21 61.

State Trustees

State Trustees is offering services free of charge to those affected by the bushfires. Contact the State Trustees' Bushfire Help Line on 03 9667 6073 or view their website at:

www.statetrustees.com.au

Outreach Program - Visiting YOU!**AFTER THE FIRES: Dahlsens and Wimmera Uniting Care join forces**

Wimmera UnitingCare staff with the support of Dahlsens Building Centre embarked on a major Outreach Program on Monday, 23 March, where every fire affected household will be visited by Agency staff during week days between 6.00 and 8.00 pm and on weekends.

Taking the opportunity to have a chat about the fires and life after the fires, Agency staff will also hand deliver a \$100 gift voucher from Horsham's Dahlsens Building Centre to each household in the fire affected area.

Wimmera Uniting Care is playing a lead role in the recovery process from the recent Remlaw fire. Wimmera Uniting Care will also provide appropriate financial information on the range of grants available from Victorian and Commonwealth Governments and from the Australian Red Cross Bushfire Appeal Fund.

Dahlsens Building Centre has partnered with Wimmera Uniting Care in terms of the provision of gift vouchers. Total voucher value is \$30,600 (based on 306 vouchers). Wimmera Uniting Care has provided Dahlsens with \$20,000 cash towards the cost of the vouchers with Dahlsens generously contributing a difference of \$10,600.

Dahlsens Building Centre Branch Manager Paul Hammond said, "Though the fires are out of the headlines, our thoughts are still with those who have been affected by the fires, and there is much as a community that we still need to do to assist." "This Outreach Program is another great example of the concern and caring that Wimmera Uniting Care is renowned for, and the leadership they give the community in our region on an ongoing basis," explained Mr Hammond. "Dahlsens are very proud and very happy to be contributing to this wonderful Wimmera Uniting Care initiative."

Have you registered for the CLEAN-UP?

A Government led clean-up operation is underway to clear more than 80,000 tons of debris from bushfire-affected properties. Properties will be cleared for **FREE**. The clean-up and demolition operation is voluntary and open to any person who owns property affected by the recent bushfires.

People may register their property as part of the clean-up and demolition program, or may apply for reimbursement if they have already cleared their property. Further details are available on the Victoria Online website or by calling 1800 136 762.

Please note: This is different to registering with Horsham Rural City Council's Recovery Centre.

Task Force Teams

Council has established a Social/Economic Development Taskforce and Natural/Built Environment Taskforce comprising relevant recovery agencies. The Taskforces are meeting fortnightly to ensure a co-ordinated approach to recovery, and to assess the community needs and to respond appropriately. Representatives of the community will be invited to participate in the Taskforce from hereon to provide feedback and input into the recovery process.

Firebreaks and Fencing

Any properties where firebreaks were constructed as part of the fire suppression operation and have not yet been reinstated, contact the Horsham Recovery Centre on 5382 9794 for reinstatement. This work will be coordinated in late March by Council, in conjunction with CFA. Fences cut whilst forming firebreaks should also be reported to the Horsham Recovery Centre for reinstatement.

Rural Revegetation Program 2009 – Fire Recovery Works

Council has again provided for the Rural Revegetation Program for the 2008-09 year and a budget of \$15,000 has been applied to the program.

This is a very successful program that offers subsidised trees to our rural communities on a varying scale depending on property size, and is designed to ensure that indigenous species of trees are made available for rural Landcare effort. It is normal for plants to be ordered in April and for them to be available during late winter early spring.

Properties that have been identified as “fire affected” and are seeking application for trees subsidies will be subsidised up to 50% of the first 100 replacement trees ordered.

New Residential Building Standards

From 6 March 2009, the new Victorian residential building standard will see new and replacement homes designed and constructed with improved bushfire protection. The government has adopted the new standards to expedite the rebuilding of bushfire affected homes without compromising safety.

If you intend to rebuild, renovate or repair a home in bushfire prone areas, the work will need to take the new standards into account. Your building designer or architect will advise you on how best to achieve this. If you are in doubt about your building work needs, it is important to contact Council's Building Surveyor, Mr Laurie Farrugia on 5382 9740 or a Private Building Surveyor. For further information, contact the Building Commission on 1300 360 380.

FREE SEMINARS

The Building Commission will be running a free industry and consumer seminar at Horsham Town Hall on 15 April, 2009 from 6.30pm - 8.30pm. To secure your place, call the Bushfire Building Line on 1300 360 320 or log onto www.buildingcommission.com.au/www/html/2224-new-residential-building-regulations-seminars-for-consumers.asp. People affected by the recent bushfires, will be taken through the building process - helping you to make the right decisions when rebuilding.

Earlier in the day (April 15), from 8.30am – 5.30 pm at the Horsham Town Hall, there will also be an all-day session for people involved in the building industry including designers, architects, builders, building surveyors and inspectors.

Health hazards on a property after a fire

Houses, sheds and other buildings or structures that are burnt in a bushfire can leave potential health hazards in the remaining rubble and ash.

Hazardous household materials that may be present after the fire include asbestos, ash from burnt treated timbers (i.e. copper chrome arsenate or 'CCA'), medicines, garden or farm chemicals, other general chemicals (e.g. cleaning products, pool chlorine etc.), metal and other residues from burnt household appliances as well as ash and dusts.

For health advice on exposure to bushfire smoke or contact with materials left after a bushfire, contact your doctor. For general health information about asbestos, CCA or other chemicals, contact the Environmental Health Unit of the Department of Human Services (DHS) on 1300 761 874. For information about transport and disposal of hazardous materials (eg. asbestos) contact the Victorian EPA (03) 9695 2722 or 1800 444 004 (toll free). For information about safe handling of building rubble or ash, as part of your employment, contact WorkSafe Victoria on (03) 9641 1555 or 1800 136 089 (toll free).

Salvation Army

If people wish to donate locally, donated goods can be dropped off at the Horsham Salvation Army in Lynott Street, Horsham. The Salvation Army will sell the goods at the Thrift Shop and distribute the proceeds to fire affected residents.

How can I donate to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund?

Donations can be made using the secure online donations form on www.redcross.org.au/Donations/onlineDonations.asp or by phoning **1800 811 700**.

How will your donation be used?

Donations made to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund through the Australian Red Cross will be used to provide assistance to individuals and communities in towns and suburbs affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. An independent panel made up of community leaders will oversee the Appeal Funds operation.

Red Cross will not deduct any costs from public donations to cover Appeal costs. All interest earned on donations will be invested back into the Appeal. Should the funds raised exceed the amount required to meet these needs, any excess funds will be used to assist in future disasters in Victoria.

Information for people wanting to help

There are a range of agencies working to help those affected by the bushfires, so it is best to seek their advice on how best to help. The easiest way to help is to make a donation to an organisation that is helping affected communities.

Cash

Cash is the most useful donation because it can be converted to whatever is needed. You can donate to The Bushfire Appeal Fund by calling 1800 811 700 or go to their website at: www.redcross.org.au.

Volunteers

People wishing to volunteer their time or services should contact Go Volunteer on 1300 366 356 or register at www.govolunteer.com.au.

Accommodation

If you would like to offer accommodation to those in need please contact the Victorian Bushfire Accommodation Donation Line on 1800 006 468. In particular, donations of caravans available for up to 12 months and longer are encouraged as these allow people to stay close to their communities when these areas are declared safe to return. To date, more than 9,900 donation calls have been received from the community and accommodation of all types have been registered. Thank you to everyone who has offered accommodation.

Food

Corporate donations of food may be made to VicRelief Foodbank. Call 03 9362 8300.

Relief Centres - where do you go in an EMERGENCY?

This interview with the Municipal Relief Centre Manager, **Ms Andrea Cameron** provides an insight into how the evacuation and care of residents and visitors during an emergency is managed.

What is your emergency recovery role, Andrea?

I am Council's Relief Centre Manager.

What is a Relief Centre?

It is a large community building which serves as a first point of call for community members who are evacuating as a result of an emergency.

Who is responsible for choosing and operating a relief centre?

The local Police, in conjunction with Mr David Eltringham, Council's Municipal Emergency Recovery Officer. The Council has several relief centres identified within the municipality.

How will the public know which ones to evacuate to and who can go?

Anyone in need of assistance can go to a relief centre. Advice on the relief centre in use during an emergency can be determined by listening to ABC Radio, contacting the Council or logging onto the web sites of the Council, CFA or DSE.

What happens when someone arrives at a relief centre?

They will be greeted by the Red Cross and have your details registered. Then any further assistance and information will be provided, including refreshments.

What services and assistance will be available to the public at the centre?

As well as catering, first aid, pet accommodation, material aid, and personal support.

Do you have to stay there once you have registered?

No, but it helps with managing enquiries about your welfare if you leave a forwarding address.

How will people know when it is safe to return home?

The relief centre is in regular contact with the emergency services and can provide that advice in a timely manner.

What if you are away on leave interstate and the centre needs to be opened?

The Council has a Deputy Relief Centre Coordinator and 3 other trained staff members.

Weir Park /Yanga Track remains closed due to public safety concerns.

Newsletter feedback or inclusions contact: media@hrcc.vic.gov.au Ph: 5382 9763