



# Mallacoota, Genoa & District Community Newsletter

## 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

This local newsletter is created weekly (or as needed) and is available in your Post Box thanks to our local Post Office team, or available online at: [eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/bushfire](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/bushfire)

East Gippsland Shire Council Bushfire Recovery Newsletter: [eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/bushfire](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/bushfire)

### Breaking news!

**Hub Coordinator announcement - Bushfire Recovery Victoria:** Welcome on board to Katie Symes, the newly appointed Mallacoota District Hub Services Coordinator with Bushfire Recovery Victoria.

The Mallacoota District Recovery Hub, located at the rear of 62 Maurice Avenue, is opening. During the COVID-19 restrictions, we kindly request that you contact Katie Symes on 0407 085 492 or via email at [MallacootaHub@brv.vic.gov.au](mailto:MallacootaHub@brv.vic.gov.au) to make an appointment.

**Will you need a break once restrictions are lifted?!** Three FREE separate timeshare weeks are available to anyone reading this newsletter. The location timeshare is for Korora Bay Resort just north of Coffs Harbour. The unit has 2 bedrooms and can accommodate 6 people. Visit <https://www.kororabayvillage.com.au> To check availability please phone Catherine Merry - 0422 158 948 - Food and transport not included.

**Red Cross Repair Grant now available:** Did your house make it through the fires relatively intact, but parts need to be fixed? You may be eligible for a \$5000 Primary Residence Repair Grant, even if you've received other assistance. Maybe you have structural repairs to do to walls, ceilings, windows, or perhaps a damaged water tank, generator or private septic system. If you're unsure or just want more info, please call 1800-RED-CROSS (1800-733-276) or apply online at [www.redcross.org.au/grants](http://www.redcross.org.au/grants). We'd love to ensure those who are eligible receive these funds.

**Job Opportunity - immediate start:** Go Traffic Recruitment are wanting local people to work as traffic controllers for bushfire recovery works. Training is available for those without qualifications. Immediate start for successful candidates. Register your interest by sending your resume to: [jobs@gottraffic.com.au](mailto:jobs@gottraffic.com.au)

**Bushfire Recovery Victoria - Grocon clean up update:**

East Gippsland's statistics are: • Properties needing clean-up: 551 (-1) • Inspections at property completed: 519 (+8) • Clean-up started: 138 (+39) • Clean-up completed: 114 (+36)

Works in areas with high numbers of destroyed buildings – including Corryong, Mallacoota and Sarsfield – will continue until the end of August, marking the state-wide completion of the clean-up program. The Victorian Government has also announced a new streamlined planning process for applications for dwellings or businesses destroyed or damaged by fire, ensuring bushfire affected Victorians can rebuild faster and more easily on their properties.

The 2020 Clean-Up Program is funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments. To view the local area work plan for the 2020 Clean-up Program, visit [www.brv.vic.gov.au](http://www.brv.vic.gov.au)

All bushfire waste is considered asbestos contaminated and can only be handled by Class A contractors. With clean-up works increasing, the supply of local, licensed crews is maxing out. Grocon and BRV continue to prioritise and engage local subcontractors where possible across the project, including the engagement of plumbers, surveyors, arborists, electricians and other services. Contractors can register their interest by visiting [www.grocon.com/bushfire-recovery-2020](http://www.grocon.com/bushfire-recovery-2020), emailing [victorianbushfirerecovery@grocon.com.au](mailto:victorianbushfirerecovery@grocon.com.au) or calling 03 9631 8833.

**Communication engagement community questionnaire in bushfire affected areas:** On behalf of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, The Social Deck are distributing a short questionnaire to bushfire affected areas so community members can provide their input, if they wish. The Social Deck hope this is one-way community members can have their say about the information they need right now and how it is delivered, given the current COVID-19 restrictions limit us from community meetings and visits at this time. The Social Deck would love your support in distributing the questionnaire as widely as possible in your community. Please access the questionnaire via the link <https://bit.ly/bushfiresrecovery>

**Green Waste update:** Green waste Bushfire green waste will still be accepted, although council has closed its green waste disposal to the general public due to social distancing. However, you must call so they know you are coming. Green waste and household metal as described above will be accepted at: • Bairnsdale Landfill – [5152 6535](tel:51526535) • Lakes Entrance Landfill – [5155 2148](tel:51552148) • Mallacoota Transfer Station – [0427 144 002](tel:0427144002)

**GERF and VFF team up to support farmers in need:** The Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund will partner with the Victorian Farmers Federation to support primary producers affected by the East Gippsland bushfires. \$1.4 million will go to farmers from the \$10.4 million GERF raised during its 2020 bushfire appeal. The VFF will administer the \$1.4 million through an online grant application process, which will enable farmers to apply for grants for fencing replacement if their property was affected by the East Gippsland fires.

Applications will be open from Monday 11 May 2020 until Friday 22 May 2020, unless the funds are expended before this date and will be assessed on receipt. Farmers can access the online application form and review the criteria on the VFF website at <https://bit.ly/3ccLDSO>

**Disaster assistance for farmers:** Register with Rural Aid for disaster assistance, available for farmers and primary producers affected by drought, fire and floods. The assistance program includes: • domestic water deliveries • fodder deliveries • financial assistance, subject to meeting Rural Aid criteria • Farm Army volunteers to help on your farm.

Rural Aid also supports eligible farmers with prepaid gift cards and provides confidential counselling assistance. Learn more at [ruralaid.org.au](http://ruralaid.org.au) or call [1300 327 624](tel:1300327624).

**Council Rates Review Completed:** The process of assessing information collected regarding property loss and the impact on individual property valuations has now been finalised. Letters and amended accounts (where required) have now been issued to ratepayers. Those properties that experienced property loss, that had a direct impact on the rating valuations of the property, have been sent amended accounts.

Rate rebates have been applied to all eligible commercial/industrial properties and amended accounts have been issued for these properties. Those properties that experienced the loss of the main dwelling on the property have had valuations adjusted and a rate waiver of the current year rates applied. Amended accounts are currently being issued for these properties.

Any ratepayers with enquiries on this process or wish to discuss their individual circumstances should contact Council's Rates and Valuations Team. Please call (03) 5153 9500, do not select 1 to speak to the Bushfire Recovery Centre, but rather hold the line to speak with a Council Customer Service officer and then ask to be transferred to the Rates and Valuations Team.

**Church and Op Shop Update:** St Peter's Op Shop open Thursdays 10-3 and Saturday 9:30am – 12:30pm with physical distancing measures in place. Clothing sale of \$1 – all adults clothes, \$0.50 – all children/baby clothes.

If you are self-isolating and require an individual appointment or items to be delivered please phone Jude on [0411 016 470](tel:0411016470). Please note that we CANNOT accept donated goods at this time, please hold onto them for a couple more months.

**RePublik:** Back issues of RePublik and E- Mouth are available to download from <https://pyrren.com/home/republik/>

New format monthly RePublik: next publication date May 15<sup>th</sup>. Copy Deadline May 7<sup>th</sup>. Contributions invited for constructive articles, community news, poetry, stories, pix, memoirs. Please send them through to [segway.pyrren@gmail.com](mailto:segway.pyrren@gmail.com)

Onward and Upward - Don Ashby

## Local Coronavirus Update by Dr Sara Renwick-Lau

Over the past week Victoria has conducted a testing blitz - doubling the number of SARS-COV 2 tests performed, from 100,000 to over 200,000 with the majority of tests performed as "screening" tests on people who had no symptoms of COVID infection and who were completely well. The tests were performed on those with the most exposure over the last few months Eg. health care workers, construction workers and those working in supermarkets and retail. (unfortunately testing was not performed in Mallacoota as the closest state screening facility is in Bairnsdale which limits our ability to detect early outbreaks locally).





Not all the results are in, but the numbers of new cases are low, despite the testing blitz.

In Victoria there have been 10 new cases reported in the past 24 hours with 1/3 of the new cases being in health care workers.

### **HOW DO WE STAY SAFE AS RESTRICTIONS ARE GRADUALLY LIFTED?**

As restrictions are lifted, the risk to our community will increase and our individual choices will become increasingly important.

To protect the vulnerable people in our town we should continue to

-  support those who are vulnerable to stay at home
-  continue to socially distance and stay 1.5m from others
-  wash your hands and
-  follow the rules

This means to only leave home for 5 reasons

1. Shopping
2. Providing care
3. Exercise
4. Work or education
5. Visiting friends and family if absolutely necessary (this does not include taking a mini-break or a holiday)

**\*Don't forget to download the COVIDSafe App and when you're out and about, carry your phone with you and use available hand sanitizer.**

### **WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF THERE ARE CORONAVIRUS CASES IN MALLACOOTA?**

With lifting of restrictions, will come an increase in COVID infections around Australia, as sporadic cases and as clusters (outbreaks). It is important to avoid any local outbreaks as they may quickly overwhelm locally available health resources. If you are unwell, please stay at home, self-isolate and call the Medical Centre on Ph 51580777

The risk of an outbreak can be minimised by limiting large groups gathering (in workplaces and recreation groups) and by minimising travel in and out of the area.

### **WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL?**

The Victorian Health Department (DHHS) advice on travel is very clear - going on holiday is NOT a reason to leave home and you should consider if visiting is necessary before deciding to travel.

They also advise avoiding overnight trips and are very clear with their advice about the ongoing closure of camping grounds and caravan parks, with the exception of permanent residents, those otherwise without a permanent location and workers (where their employer is working toward limiting the spread of coronavirus)

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/travel-restrictions-coronavirus>

For local information follow the Mallacoota Medical Centre FB page.

### ***Mallacoota and District Recovery Association - MADRA***

#### **Waiting in anticipation for the election results?:**

The ballot papers are flying into the Victorian Electoral Commission – 77% of members have already completed and returned them. The ballot papers will be opened and counted after the close at 5.00pm on Tuesday 19 May.

If you were a member when the Voters Roll closed on April 16, and haven't yet returned your ballot, you are encouraged to do so immediately

#### **Communicating with the Association:**

Copies of the Snapshot Survey Report may be obtained by contacting the Association.

Membership Application Forms are also available.

**Email:** [mallacoota.district.assoc.2020@gmail.com](mailto:mallacoota.district.assoc.2020@gmail.com)

**Mail:** Mallacoota and District Recovery Association, Locked Bag No. 1005, Post Office, Mallacoota Vic 3892

**Webpage:** [eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/CootaRecovery](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/CootaRecovery)

### ***The Sanctuary Youth Centre***

We are continuing to find ways to **connect without relying on screens** too heavily - it's hard but it's happening! Brodie is reaching out via phone calls to connect and get info, and keep the decisions about the future of our youth and group informed by the ideas and insights of young crew who live here.

Main themes that keep coming up are how good it's gonna be when we can hang out together again and do **fun stuff**.

It's really important to **get outside and move your body** regularly. In acknowledgement of this, our cargo bikes are available to borrow for up to a week at a time. Contact us if you're under 25 and would like to take responsibility and enjoy one of the bikes for a while. You'll need to sign a form taking responsibility for the care of the bikes and any loss or damage done while you have them. If you're under 16 you'll need an adult to sign for you.

This week we have submitted some **funding applications** to FRRR. Hopefully one day soon we'll have some good news to report back and celebrate!

Our **radio show** Utopian ExSpectators is on 3MGB 12-2pm Tuesday and our edited version of the show is podcasted to our website SanctuaryMYG.Org weekly. Airly has been hosting the show so far and it's great to hear her voice over the airwaves! Anyone is welcome to join us - let us know when you' like to come in!

Contact us at SanctuaryMYG.Org, fb or [insta@sanctuarymyg](mailto:insta@sanctuarymyg) or [mallacotayouthcentre@gmail.com](mailto:mallacotayouthcentre@gmail.com)

### ***Support Services***

#### **Children and Youth online resources:**

- BeYou (previously Kidsmatters & Mindmatters): <https://beyou.edu.au/>
- Emerging Minds: <https://emergingminds.com.au/>
- Australian Govt Dept Health: <https://headtohealth.gov.au/meaningful-life/connectedness/children>
- My Hero is You (children's book specific to Covid-19): <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-04/My%20Hero%20is%20You%2C%20Storybook%20for%20Children%20on%20COVID-19.pdf>
- Youth Mental Health: <https://www.iaymh.org/iaymh-resources> (Covid-19 specific but worth receiving their updates)



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**Psychologist Support:** The Royal Flying Doctor Service together with Relationships Australia are offering counselling via telehealth or phone. There is no charge for this. This can be to discuss current stresses and difficulties or for mental health problems. Mary Nicholas is a Psychologist with Relationships Australia. Fiona Mitchell is a Psychologist and a Nurse with over 30 years working in healthcare and is with the RFDS. For appointments please call 1800 001 068 or 03 8412 0480

**A Funeral for a Home** is still available for those whose houses were destroyed by the fire. An opportunity to have a time of remembrance and prayer for all that your home has meant to you. Either before Grocon begin onsite, or after their clean-up is completed. For more information contact Rev Jude Benton [0411 016 470](tel:0411016470).

**Library Service:** The doors may be closed, but our libraries are now operating! Contactless pick up is now available. You can browse and reserve items using our online catalogue: [www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/libraries](http://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/libraries) or contact the library to request the library staff select items from preferred genre's or authors. A pickup time will be arranged for items to be collected. To return books, just place them in the return box outside the shire office in the opening hours as stated. For more information contact Library staff 8:30am – 5pm Monday to Friday. [5153 9500](tel:51539500) Email: [library@egipps.vic.gov.au](mailto:library@egipps.vic.gov.au)

**Community delivery service:** If you are self-isolating and would like items delivered, (newspaper, groceries, pharmaceuticals, post etc..) please contact MDHSS reception on [5158 0243](tel:51580243) and ask for Janine. If you would like to volunteer to help with deliveries, please also contact Janine. This service is offered to **EVERYONE** in the community, not just MDHSS members.

**Bush Fire Case Support Program:** Bushfire Case Support Program are continuing to provide case support to ANYONE who has been affected by the recent bushfires. You may not have felt that you need someone to support your journey until now, but are finding things difficult or are feeling isolated? Please reach out to find out how we might be able to support you. This support is now available over the phone and / or email now with the COVID-19 restrictions. If you already have a case manager, please contact Gippsland Lakes Complete Health on [5155 8300](tel:51558300), if you would like to be referred to a case manager, please call Windemere on [1300 946 337](tel:1300946337).

**MDHSS Virtual Exercise Classes:** Virtual exercise classes are being ran 9:30am Monday – Friday. Call MDHSS on [5158 0243](tel:51580243) for links to social connection groups and stay active and connected during self-isolation.

**COVIDConnect with Red Cross:** As we all stay home to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, it can be easy to lose the social connections that inspire us, entertain us and make us feel part of our community. It's important that no-one faces this pandemic alone, especially here in Mallacoota and surrounding areas, where our community has already been through so much. COVIDConnect is a new, free service from Red Cross, providing a friendly phone chat with Red Cross volunteers until usual social networks return to normal. If you're over 18, feeling isolated or lonely and would like a chat with a Red Cross volunteer, please register at [redcross.org.au/covidconnect](http://redcross.org.au/covidconnect) or call [1800 733 276](tel:1800733276)

**Support specifically for the elderly and carers:** Older people and carers are welcome to call the hotline to speak to friendly trained staff from a senior's advocacy organisation. The hotline can provide older people, their family and carers with personal support, answer questions and up to date information on the latest guidelines enacted by the Federal Government. If you are feeling lonely, distressed or confused, you can call the COVID-19 support line on [1800 171 866](tel:1800171866) (free call). This is a dedicated service for older Australians. It provides a safe place to speak with an expert who can listen and offer practical help and advice. The support line is available Monday to Friday, except public holidays, from 8:30am to 6pm. For more information visit <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/covid-19-information-support>

Carers Victoria continues to provide services during COVID 19. While our office is closed to visitors and face to face contact is temporarily suspended, we can still support carers with: emotional support and service advice, telephone or online counselling sessions, in-home respite and other staffed essential services to come to your home, delivered goods and equipment, equipment that may help you through the social isolation and online supports and education. Phone for assistance or visit <https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/> or call [1800 514 845](tel:1800514845)



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**GIVIT:** GIVIT is working with charities and support organisations to match needs in the community with donated items. GIVIT offers a 'virtual warehouse' of pledged goods. If you have sheds filled with donated items, please consider listing those items with GIVIT so other communities in need can see what may be available. Registered charities, case workers and organisations can also make requests for items on behalf of their clients and community members. For more information or to register go to [www.givit.org.au](http://www.givit.org.au) or contact Lisa via [VIC@givit.org.au](mailto:VIC@givit.org.au)

### *Financial Support*

**Local Bendigo Bank Support:** Mallacoota Community Bank has retained the services of well-respected East Gippsland banking identity, Mr Ken Mutton (Formally Branch Manager at Paynesville) for the likely duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Ken is ready to assist bushfire impacted business and individuals and can help with the full range of banking services. Contact Ken through the Mallacoota Community Bank at 5158 0111 or on his mobile 0419 385 860.

**Local Centrelink Support:** You can use the self-service via phone, fax and computer / internet to access during opening hours or MDHSS staff can assist with online services: completing and lodging forms, providing brochures and registering for Centrelink or Medicare. **OPENING HOURS:** Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, 10am to 12.30pm (assisted service); Thursday Closed; Friday 9am to 5pm (self service).

**Council's Business 'Grant Buddy' Initiative:** In response to the economic impact caused from the recent Bushfire and the current COVID-19 pandemic, Council is increasing its support to East Gippsland Business operators with the introduction of the 'Grant Buddy' initiative. In collaboration with Small Business Victoria, this initiative will assist business operators in navigating the myriad of grant funding and support schemes available, along with assisting business operators with completing application documentation.

If you are unsure if whether your business is eligible for financial support or you simply need an extra hand, friendly local assistance is available. You can now book a phone appointment with either a Small Business Advisor or a Grant Buddy, at a time that works for you. Simply contact Council's Recovery Centre on 5153 9500, then dial 1 to get started.

**St Vincent de Paul Society:** The emergency relief assistance phone number is 13 18 12 during business hours. Grants are available for things like clothing, food, emergency shelter, back-to-school costs, and paying for livestock feed and tools. Callers will be asked to provide certain details to verify their eligibility.

**Anglicare Free Financial Counselling:** Anglicare is reminding residents of the free financial counselling available to individuals and families affected by the East Gippsland bushfires. Financial counsellors can: • Assist with insurance matters • Assist with access to government assistance programs • Renegotiate loans, payments and access banking assistance • Help sort out how to pay debts, bills, and avoid scams • Provide advice on options due to loss of income • Refer to other services as required Bushfire affected residents can contact the service by email at [bushfirefcpgipps@anglicarevic.org.au](mailto:bushfirefcpgipps@anglicarevic.org.au) or call [1800 286 260](tel:1800286260). Referrals are also accepted.

**Salvation Army Assistance:** The Salvation Army's Mallacoota Bushfire Recovery assistance are available through a telephone service. Please call 0429 616 253 from 9:30am to 4:30pm.

**Red Cross:** The Red Cross **Rebuilding Grant** is available to assist owner/occupiers whose primary place of residence was destroyed or damaged beyond repair. This \$20,000 grant is over and above the original \$20,000 grant that was available to people who lost their primary place of residence. There is no need to complete the full registration again, you just need to phone Red Cross, provide your details (name & address) or previous 'claim' number if you have it. This new grant will assist with building permits/planning and other expenses for owner/occupiers rebuilding their primary place of residence. You can access all Red Cross **Services and support** by calling [1800 733 276](tel:1800733276) or go to <https://www.redcross.org.au/grants>

**For other recovery information and support go to Bushfire Recovery Victoria:**

[1800 560 760](tel:1800560760) <https://www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-victoria>