



Mallacoota, Genoa & District Community Newsletter

17th April 2020

This newsletter is created weekly (or as needed) and is available in your Post Box or here:
eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Bushfire_information/Bushfire_support_and_information

Breaking news!

Emergency Accommodation Privacy: Temporary accommodation at the Foreshore Holiday Park has been provided to some Mallacoota residents who were displaced from their homes as a result of the Bush fires. It is important to note that the park is not re-open. We ask that all Mallacoota residents please respect their privacy and do not access the top section of the Park where the accommodation is. Road closure signs will be installed where possible to help support this.

If you have housing needs, please call your Case manager 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)

Let's get online: So far, we have had a great response from the community about their data and device needs. We would like to try to source opportunities to support the Mallacoota, Genoa and District communities to be connected online during the challenges of the COVID-19 isolation. If you currently DO NOT have access to get online but would like to, please register your needs so we can investigate providing you with the support you need. Do this by providing the following information: Name, Address, Number and age of people in the home needing this support. Also let us know which of the following you need: Data (i.e. internet access / dongle), Device (i.e. Laptop, smart phone, iPad) and Tech Support needs (i.e. someone to call you to help you get up and going). Please register preferably via email to mallacootacp@egipps.vic.gov.au or phone on Wednesday's between 9am and 4pm to 5158 0300. We would appreciate having all this information by no later than Sunday the 19th of April.

Dr Rob Gordon Webinar: Supported by the Red Cross, Dr Rob Gordon recently held a webinar relating to Bush fire recovery during COVID-19; Looking after yourself, family, friends and community. This webinar was reordered and is now available to watch by clicking on this link or typing this into your internet search engine - https://youtu.be/1iQealJg_1Q
After you've watched the webinar, the Red Cross would be so grateful for your feedback by completing a quick survey to help them improve the work they do. FEEDBACK SURVEY: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WF8VCV2>

Wellness Webinar for Women in Regional, Rural or remote areas: Cynthia, and her friend and colleague Leadership Coach Louise Thomson, are hosting a weekly webinar called Well-Being Wednesday to connect with a rural, regional or remote women to have a chat about well-being, as a support over the next few months. There are 4 episodes available to catch up on - <https://www.cynthiamahoney.com.au/well-being-wednesday>

Mallacoota clean-up update: As of the 9th of April, 171 properties are registered as requiring clean-up. Of these, 163 property inspections have been completed and 17 clean-ups have commenced, with 9 clean-ups completed. Community members are encouraged to call Grocon on 03 9631 8833 should they wish to discuss the clean-up. Grocon staff are also available to discuss clean-up at the Mallacoota site office located at Shop 2, 57 Maurice Avenue, Mallacoota.

You can still register for clean-up if you haven't done so yet. Register by calling 1800 560 760 or online at brv.vic.gov.au. You will receive confirmation of your registration from Grocon via telephone or email. Grocon will undertake an inspection of your property where you will complete a consent form. Property owners will be provided at least 72 hours' notice of clean-up commencing.

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 or contact Lisa via VIC@givit.org.au.

Need a chat?: Need to talk to someone? The counsellors at the Royal Flying Doctors Service and Relationships Australia are available to talk with via telephone or telehealth. There is no charge for this. A time can be booked with either Fiona or Mary by calling [1800 001 068](tel:1800001068) or [03 8412 0480](tel:0384120480)



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Church Update: A church service suitable for all denominations is being broadcast by Reverend Jude Benton at 9am Sunday mornings on local radio 3MGB -101.7 Mallacoota, 96.9 Genoa.

With a change of seasons, we understand people's need for winter items: clothes, bedding etc. Please ring Jude on **0411 016 470** to arrange a time to meet at the St Peter's Op Shop to gather items you require. Priority will be given to those who have suffered property loss.

Croajingolong National Park (The Narrows track): Limited access is being restored to the popular Narrows Walking Track. The teams have undertaken tree risk works opening a short length of track extending north from Bucklands Jetty. The hazardous tree works, and track clearing works have also been completed on these visitor sites: Allan Head picnic area and the walking track to Cemetery Bite picnic area, Cape Horn picnic area and jetty, Goanna Bay picnic area and jetty, Narrows Picnic area and jetty.

Victorian Farmers Federation Grant: The VFF have just opened a \$3000 grant program. To be eligible you need to have lived in a fire impacted area and your property be damaged by the December/January fire. Eligible landowners need to get in an application asap. The link below has a further link to the application form or alternatively you can contact firecovery2020@vff.org.au or by telephone on [1300 882 833](tel:1300882833) to be sent a form.
https://www.vff.org.au/vff/Projects/Fire_Recovery_Grants/vff/Projects/Fire_Recovery_Grants.aspx?hkey=a29b497b-df95-4b92-8a1d-fc798195fcf6

Construction Induction Card Training - TAFE Gippsland: CIC - Construction Induction Card Training for Mallacoota Community is being held at Mallacoota District Health - Miva Miva Hall on 22nd and 23rd April 2020. Make yourself eligible to enter any construction site by completing this induction. Once you have been issued with a Construction Induction Card, you will be able to complete tasks in complex and rigid environments. This course will teach you how to ensure safe, efficient and effective work practices are used on construction sites. For more information and to register go to: www.tafegippsland.edu.au/courses/find_a_course/courses/courses_by_department/short_courses_for_individuals/construction_and_safety/construction_induction_training_formerly_red_card

Free financial counselling: Anglicare can provide free financial counselling to individuals and families affected by the bushfires across East Gippsland. Financial counsellors can assist with insurance matters, access to government assistance programs, renegotiating loans, payments and accessing 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. Referrals can be emailed to: bushfirefcpgipps@anglicarevic.org.au or call 1800 286 260.

Opportunities for involvement in Bushfire enquiry: All options for providing input into the enquiry will be available until 24 April. This ensures the Inquiry team has time to use the information in the first phase of the Inquiry: Preparedness for and response to the 2019-20 Victorian fire season:

Community submissions (post or email): Write about any or all of your experiences in relation to preparedness and response to the 2019-20 fires. Please submit via: **Email:** igem@igem.vic.gov.au or **Post:** Inspector-General for Emergency Management, GPO Box 4356, Melbourne VIC 3000

Telephone surveys: Answer questions in relation to the preparedness and response to the 2019-20 fire season. All questions are voluntary, and you can select topics that interest you the most. To take the survey over your phone, please call IGEM on [\(03\) 8684 7920](tel:0386847920) or email: igem@igem.vic.gov.au. People who register via phone or email will receive a call-back from IGEM at the time they have nominated.

Telephone submissions: You will be able to discuss your experiences in relation to preparedness and response to the 2019-20 fires. The IGEM team member who you speak with will take notes that will be used as evidence in the Inquiry. To provide a submission over the phone, please call IGEM on [\(03\) 8684 7920](tel:0386847920) or email: igem@igem.vic.gov.au

Ongoing opportunities

Phase 2 of the Inquiry will provide another range of opportunities for individuals to contribute. The second phase will focus on relief and recovery. IGEM intends to resume face-to-face community meetings once it is safe to do so.

Mallacoota and District Recovery Association - MADRA

What has the Thinking Group been doing?: Until the forthcoming election is finalised, and the Committee is able to take up their role, members of the Thinking Group continue to be active on behalf of the Association. Their major task has been getting the Committee Election set up and getting information about this out to members (see below for details).

Keeping the Association's Profile High: In this interim period, until the committee is finalised, members of the Thinking Group have been active in a variety of ways on behalf of Association members, and our communities. This has included endeavouring to improve communication which continues to be a challenge. Like many of you, no doubt, we are learning to manage life via Skype and Zoom meetings in the era of the Covid-19 Stage 3 lock-down.

Another major task has been that of ensuring that all levels of government, and relevant government agencies and charitable organisation are aware of the Association and its purposes. To this end we continue to be represented at Recovery Management Team meetings. We have initiated ongoing discussions, particularly with Bushfire Recovery Victoria and East Gippsland Shire Council who hold the lead responsibility for the communities' recovery from the impact of the bushfires.

The Snapshot Survey: Thank you to the more than sixty people who responded to the request to participate in this survey. Responses are currently being analysed and a report should be completed by next Monday 20 April. A summary will be sent to all members and published in this newsletter. A detailed report will be made available to all committee members once the election is finalised.

MADRA Committee Election: An election is being held to fill twelve vacancies on the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Committee:

Nominations closed: The closing date and time for accepting nominations closed at 12 noon on Thursday 16 April 2020. Late nominations will not be accepted.

Who can vote: Persons aged 15 years and over who were residents or owned property in the communities of Mallacoota and Genoa and Wallagarragh River Catchments at the time of the 2019/20 bushfires may apply for full membership of the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association. You can apply to join the Association at any time. However, the Voters Roll for this election closed at 12 noon on Thursday 16 April 2020.

Voting: The election will be conducted entirely by post. Voting material will be mailed to all full members of the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association on Tuesday 28 April 2020. Voting will close at 5:00pm on Tuesday 19 May 2020 and is not compulsory.

Getting further information: If you need an Application for Membership form, or any other information about the Association, please email: Mallacoota.district.assoc.2020@gmail.com.

Becoming a Member: A reminder that Application forms can be downloaded from the Association's interim web page: https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Bushfire_information/Mallacoota_and_district_recovery

Webpage Access: We now have an interim web page linked to the Council website where all relevant information regarding the community led recovery process will be available (until a standalone website is set up):

https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Bushfire_information/Mallacoota_and_district_recovery

Please check this page regularly to keep up to date with information. Regular updates will also be provided to association members.

Stay safe, stay well.

COVID-19 updates

Message from our local Paramedics: Ambulance Victoria (AV), as you can imagine, are all about Covid 19 now. AV are very aware that social distancing is having an impact on community mental health throughout towns in East Gippsland with many people already under increased stress due to the fires. Whilst we are fortunate to not have had any Covid-19 cases locally, we must keep to the rules of hand washing, sanitising and social distancing.

Anyone calling an ambulance is going to notice a change in our protocols. We will be wearing protective eyewear gloves and a mask to every case and donning full PPE to every respiratory case. This may be alarming to some patients and their neighbours, seeing us arrive in the full PPE but please be assured this does not mean your neighbour has Covid-19. These measures are a precautionary to protect our staff and patients.

Medical Centre update by Dr Sara:

NEW COVID testing criteria - If you have any of the below symptoms please CALL (do not visit) the Medical Centre to arrange testing: Fever/chills without an obvious cause other than COVID-19; Cough, shortness of breath or sore throat. We will generally provide testing on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and will avoid seeing other patients during these times. It is especially important that any health care and frontline workers (those workers in close contact with others) get tested if they have ANY symptoms. Be aware that anyone who has symptoms and is tested must quarantine until advised by their doctor or the DHHS.

Why are we increasing our testing?: The number of new cases in Australia is continuing to decrease (only 44 in the last 24hrs - compared to our peak of 450/24hrs which occurred soon after travel restrictions were put in place). With so many people being careful to follow official advice to stay at home and practice social distancing, the "exponential growth" curve has flattened. It does take about 2 weeks for any changes in restrictions to be decreases in numbers of new cases. The evidence is that what we have all been doing is working!

This means that for Australia, our health system has had time to manage all areas of its health resources and we are now currently NOT facing the health system overwhelm that was a real possibility only 6 weeks ago. AND the good news for Mallacoota and surrounds is that spread of COVID has been slowed before infections were widespread enough to move into more remote areas.

As of today - the testing criteria has been widened, which is an active approach to looking for evidence of community transmission. "Casting the net wider" will give a more thorough understanding of infection rates and help guide future decisions making for health authorities.

Again, remember if you have any symptoms, or you're not sure please CALL to speak your doctor.

* Under 65 influenza immunisations are still currently not yet available*

*Finally, a quick **thank-you to the team at the Medical Centre** - you have all barely skipped a beat through all of this and we couldn't be more grateful *

More details in subsequent Newsletters. For local information follow the Mallacoota Medical Centre FB page.

The Sanctuary

Back to school? Or not..... Good luck to everyone adapting their schedules and expectations to term 2 of 2020, starting on Wednesday. Does it exist? Keep looking after yourselves and each other - checking in with friends online and waves from a distance, keeping up the exercise and hobbies. Long hours spent on the couch are very important, too!

The Department of Education will be sorting out **internet access and dongles**. When they announce what they'll provide, The Sanctuary will be finding ways to get access for young people who still need support accessing the internet. Please register your data, device and support needs to mallacootacp@egipps.vic.gov.au or phone on Wednesday's between 9am and 4pm to [5158 0300](tel:51580300).



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This week @ the Sanctuary...

THURSDAY 16th at 4pm - Writing w Hannah and Gathering follow up.

FRIDAY 17th at 4pm - Games and music recording planning.

Contact us via Facebook, Instagram @SanctuaryMYG or email mallacootayouthcentre@gmail.com

Financial assistance and Support Services

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).

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.

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: Red Cross no longer have a face to face service in Mallacoota due to the COVID-19 restrictions. **Services and support** are available by calling 1800 RED CROSS (1800 733 276) or go to <https://www.redcross.org.au/grants>
The Red Cross **rebuilding grant** announced on 31st March, 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 as Red Cross will already have the details from previous application/registration. The applicant will need to phone Red Cross, provide their details (name & address) or previous 'claim' number so the call taker can retrieve their full file and process the new claim. It's important to note that the new grant is for owner/occupiers only to assist with rebuilding (as opposed to holiday homes or renters). The new grant will assist with building permits/planning and other expenses for owner/occupiers rebuilding their primary place of residence. [1800 733 276](tel:1800733276) <https://www.redcross.org.au/grants>

Centrelink Support: Registering for Centrelink - If you have been affected by the COVID-19 restrictions, Centrelink has now updated its processes so you can register your intention to claim a Centrelink payment on the Centrelink website. This means you do not need to call or visit a Centrelink office to start the process. You don't need to complete a full claim right now. You can register your intention to claim at a time and place that works for you. Centrelink will backdate your payment. Once you've registered your intention to make a claim, Centrelink will contact you to let you know what the next steps are. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19>

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

For other support services and information go to **Bushfire Recovery Victoria:** Phone 1800 560 760 website: <https://www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-victoria>

Opportunities for involvement

Victorian Inquiry into the 2019-20 Fire season



All options will be available until 24 April. This ensures the Inquiry team has time to use the information in the first phase of the Inquiry: Preparedness for and response to the 2019-20 Victorian fire season.

Community submissions (post or email)

Write about any or all of your experiences in relation to preparedness and response to the 2019-20 fires.

Please submit via:

Email: igem@igem.vic.gov.au

Post: Inspector-General for Emergency Management

GPO Box 4356

Melbourne VIC 3000

Telephone surveys

Answer questions in relation to the preparedness and response to the 2019-20 fire season. All questions are voluntary and you can select topics that interest you the most.

To take the survey over your phone, please call IGEM on (03) 8684 7920 or email:

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- your interest in doing a survey
- name
- contact number
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