

Community Connection and Wellbeing Work Group

11.00am to 1.00pm, Saturday 4 June

Meeting 1# Minutes

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

DRAFT SUBJECT TO RATIFICATION OF WORK GROUP

Attendees: Debra Hocking (Chair); Carolyn Tatchell; Yvonne Sheppard; Alexandra Forbes; Matthew Chamberlain, DHHS; Clare Malone (COS).

Apologies: Charles Le Feuvre; Christine Shaw.

1 Welcome and Introductions

Debra Hocking welcomed Work Group members and invited them to introduce themselves. The Group noted apologies from Charles Le Feuvre and Christine Shaw.

Debra Hocking provided an overview of the Terms of Reference for the Work Group noting that it will report through herself as Chair to the CRC. She also noted that this will assist in ensuring there is no duplication in activities across 4 the Work Groups.

The Work Group discussed membership and agreed that Jay Robinson should be invited to become a member of the Group.

2 Handover of Work from the Wye Sep Recovery Group

Carolyn Tatchell provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Wye Sep Recovery Group as follows:

- From the day of the fire responding to calls offering assistance and managing large numbers of meals provided for volunteers
- Facilitating provision of \$2,000 from the Lions Clubs those permanent residents who lost their homes and distribution of other goods such as tools
- Connecting those people who had lost their homes with those who wished to provide their homes to them
- Coordinating the distribution of the four vehicles donated by Nissan
- Liaising with the Spirit Foundation in relation to the management and distribution of donated funds.

Matt Chamberlain explained that DHHS also facilitated the provision of funds to permanent residents who lost their homes immediately following the fire. He also explained that he is still working with these people to facilitate further payments of up to \$27,000 for which they may be eligible.

The Work Group discussed the frustrations around commitments that were made in relation to the provision of case workers. Matt Chamberlain explained that while the services were provided, the service delivery model had changed from case workers following the Black Saturday experience where they had not been found to be an effective approach. It was recognized that the change of policy regarding 'case managers' was not communicated clearly to the community at the time creating an incorrect assumption and confusion on behalf of community members. This error was noted by DHHS with a view to improving the communication and clarifying expectations in any future incidents. Matt further explained that from 10 January DHHS had two Case Support Officers working with affected residents to assist them to navigate the service systems available to them. Matt advised that he has been meeting regularly with a number of people over the past six months to ensure they have the assistance they require. Refer to Item 3 for further details.

Debra Hocking and Work Group members acknowledged and thanked Carolyn and the other members of the Work Group for the significant work they have undertaken as a part of the recovery.

3 Overview of Work Undertaken to Date

Clare Malone provided an overview of the work undertaken to date in terms of Community Connection and Wellbeing as follows:

- DHHS Support for Community Members
 - DHHS on 14 January engaged two Case Support Officers to assist affected community members. The case support officers spoke directly to 91 households and continued to have regular contact with 23 households that require extra support. There interactions ranged from inquiries about financial support, counselling, insurance, council issues and progress of clean up and all interactions with community members were recorded on the Crises Works database. A 24 hour number was also established to enable community members to contact the team if they required any support to link in with counselling services or to answer any general enquiries.

- Since Christmas Day, DHHS has provided financial support through both Relief Payments and Re-establishment grants. Staff are continuing to work with affected residents to complete their applications for re-establishment payments.
- DHHS also engaged Rob Gordon and David Younger to discuss the impacts on communities of major emergencies at both Community Meetings and Community Conversations with small groups.
- WyeSep Recovery Group
 - Discussions have been undertaken between Carolyn Tatchell and Jay Robinson and Het Ramp from Lorne Hospital in relation to organising small groups to bring people together with a clinical psychologist to facilitate conversations with them to de-brief on their experiences.
- Community Based Recovery Activities

Funding of \$250,000 has been provided by Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to the Colac Otway Shire (COS) to deliver a range of recovery services through a Coordinator Bushfire Recovery and a Community Development Officer. The two positions will assist the delivery of the requirements for recovery services and community development programs at community level via municipal recovery arrangements. This will include:

- Consulting with the community and other relevant organisations to identify community recovery issues and opportunities
- Developing and coordinating the delivery of a Community Recovery Program of activities and events
- Sourcing funding and seeking support from service agencies and spontaneous volunteers
- Working with relevant agencies/organisations to ensure community access to recovery information from all service providers and across all recovery environments
- Liaising with DHHS to ensure relevant and established linkages and pathways with relevant personal and support services, community health, family and vulnerable services
- Provision of support to community groups assisting with local recovery activities.

The Coordinator Bushfire Recover has undertaken consultation with individual community members and a range of agencies to identify potential programs, activities and events, tools and project leveraging opportunities to inform a preliminary program for discussion with the Work Group.

- Free Health Checks for the Wye River and Separation Creek Community
 - The Lorne Hospital offered at no cost comprehensive medical checks to those who fought the fires and supported the community in the initial critical post fire period. During the appointments additional ways to support health could be discussed and flu shots were also offered. Appointments were initially made available for 6 weeks from Wednesday 6 April to Wednesday 18 May and have now been extended.
- Funding Agreement Between DHHS and Lorne Hospital
 - DHHS has provided \$70,000 in funding to Lorne Community Hospital to deliver a range of recovery initiatives to support the psychosocial needs of the affected communities.

4 Temporary Accommodation Needs

Clare Malone explained that Big 4 has advised that one of their permanent residents no longer wants his cabin and is offering it to someone who has lost their holiday home. It is understood that the cabin is free but Big 4 charges will apply. She further explained that the Lions Club is funding and managing another cabin at Big 4 which is available to property owners who lost their homes for temporary accommodation. The Work Group agreed that it would be preferable to manage both cabins through one point of contact.

Matt Chamberlain also noted that there is a need to consider longer term accommodation needs for permanent residents who lost their homes as their insurance may not continue to cover accommodation costs. He also explained that DHHS has just finalised a MOU with Air B&B which could be of assistance.

Debra Hocking also advised that the Surf Life Saving Club has a bunkhouse with 30 beds, noting however that this is currently being used by contractors.

Action/Outcome

Matt Chamberlain and Clare Malone to consider to discuss offline and provide information and options to the Work Group at the next meeting.

5. Responding to Issues Raised by Permanent Residents Who Lost their homes

Clare Malone and Matt Chamberlain explained that they have been made aware that some of the permanent residents who have lost their homes are seeking clarity in relation to a number of matters including:

- The allocation of money raised e.g. by Spirit Foundation

- A request for COS to provide a talk about operational procedure during the Christmas fire to Residents who lost homes, as well as the possibility of a tour of the area (either virtual or in person)
- Promised Case Managers.

Work Group members highlighted the importance of ensuring that these residents have all of the information they require and agreed to convene a meeting with them and have in attendance the relevant agencies to provide this information.

Action/Outcome

Clare Malone and Matt Chamberlain to arrange a meeting following the next meeting of the Work Group with the representatives of the Work Group and permanent residents who have lost their homes and relevant agencies to provide the information they require.

6 Community Firewood

The Work Group discussed the need to put in place an equitable process for the distribution of the community firewood. Debra Hocking advised that Peter Jacobs has volunteered to assist with the distribution.

A range of issues were raised by Work Group members including: OH&S, whether it could be delivered and if it could be stored for people who have lost their homes.

Action/Outcome

The Group agreed that a system should be put in place for people to register if they would like some firewood. Clare Malone and Matt Chamberlain to discuss with Peter Jacobs and develop a process for the consideration of the Work Group.

7 Power

The Work Group agreed that reconnection of power is a priority and that the need for an urgent response through WyeSep Connect be conveyed to the CRC.

8 Impact of the Tree Removal on Wellbeing

The Work Group discussed the impact that the removal of trees has had on the community, noting that there has been a lot of misinformation and how such matters can be handled better in the future. It was noted that this would be subject of discussion at the Community Meeting scheduled for the following day.

9 Ideas & Opportunities

Clare Malone informed the Group about the Firefoxes explaining that they were formed following the Black Saturday bushfires by local women who provided assistance to people in the region in the months and years following the bushfires and that they have hosted an array of events that bring the community and families together. The Work Group agreed to invite the Firefoxes to attend a meeting of the Work Group to share their experiences.

Debra also explained that Christine Shaw had provided the following ideas which would be discussed at the next meeting so that she can speak to them: Arts Project, Community Volunteers, Promotion of great work being done in town, Emergency Media and Public Affairs Conference, Xmas Day Anniversary of Fires and a Story Board.

Debra also explained that she would like to establish an informal reference group by which the Work Group can run by ideas to seek broader community input.

Action/Out

The Work Group supported the establishment of an informal reference group by which the Work Group can run by ideas to seek broader community input.

10. Other Business

The Work Group agreed to support the Little Street Libraries Project Wye River/Separation Creek and its funding application to COS for the project.

Carolyn Tatchell requested to remain on the email list for the Work Group while overseas.

It was agreed that the Work Group meetings will be held 11am to 1pm on the first Saturday of each month with the next meeting scheduled for 2 July.

