

RENEWAL PLAN FOR WYE RIVER AND SEPARATION CREEK



March 2017 - March 2018

Acknowledgements

The Community Resilience Committee wishes to acknowledge the support of DELWP in the production of this Renewal Plan.

Photo credits

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Contents

Wye River and Separation Creek Community Statement	2
Values and Principles.....	2
1. Community Connection and Wellbeing	4
Renewal Plan Activities.....	5
Building and sustaining an inclusive and respectful community	5
Supporting individual people - maintaining capacity for individual counselling and other support services	5
Reducing isolation - improving telecommunication via NBN and telecom services	5
Maintaining capacity for community connection	6
Recognising connections with the community of Kennett River	6
2. Flora, Fauna and Beachscape	7
Renewal Plan Activities.....	8
Replanting to renew flora and fauna	8
Monitor and maintain trees on Council owned and managed land.....	8
Re-open Harrington Park	9
Establish a demonstration fire-resistant garden.....	9
Improve beach access between Wye River and Separation Creek	9
Advocate for inclusion of the Donlevy Fitzpatrick estate in the Parks and Reserves Crown Estate	9
3. Planning, Building and Fire	11
Renewal Plan Activities.....	13
Safer Together – place based planning to increase resilience against fire and the impact of natural events	13
Facilitating rebuilding	13
Securing reliability of access	14
Implementing drainage works to manage stormwater	14
Monitor and forecast development activity	14
Ensure accurate land information to support rebuilding	15
4. Business and Tourism	16
Renewal Plan Activities.....	16
Extension of Great Ocean Road Walk	16
Wye River Walking Tracks.....	17
Economic activity along the Great Ocean Road	17
Improving tourist infrastructure on the Great Ocean Road (Wye River and Separation Creek Section).....	17
5. Where To From Here?	19
A Period of Transition	19

Wye River and Separation Creek Community Statement

Values and Principles

Wye River and Separation Creek is a small, inclusive and respectful community in a place of great natural beauty that highly values the forest, beach and natural landscape, and works to preserve and sustain them

- *All community voices are valued and respected*
- *Natural beauty is enhanced by small scale and informal facilities*
- *Regeneration of indigenous flora and fauna has the highest priority*
- *Development is sympathetic to the environment and of minimal impact*
- *Risk is managed to balance amenity, public health and safety*

As far as possible, our future is about community driven and community owned renewal

This Renewal Plan for Wye River and Separation Creek has been produced by the Community Resilience Committee (CRC), in consultation with the community, to identify and implement initiatives to achieve the vision that the community has identified for itself and which is encapsulated in this values and principles statement

The Renewal Plan lays the foundations for achieving the vision encapsulated by the Community Statement

The Renewal Plan has been endorsed by the Leadership Group responsible for the oversight of the recovery of Wye River and Separation Creek following the fire. The Leadership Group is comprised of the Emergency Management Commissioner, the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Chief Executive, Colac Otway Shire (COS). The Group noted that the outstanding funding decisions will be made on merit at the appropriate time

Prior to the fire, the community broadly comprised:

- 400 private properties
- 236 permanent or semi-permanent residents
- 2,500 summer campers
- 2,000 summer renters in residential structures
- Temporary residents and tourists year round

The primary community structures are the:

- CFA Fire Station
- Wye River Surf Life Saving Club
- Foreshore Caravan Park

The primary private businesses are the:

- Wye River Hotel
- General Store and Café
- BIG 4 Caravan Park
- holiday rentals, and
- support services for business and property owners

The focus for much recovery activity in 2016 was on:

- clean-up of the damage resulting from the fires
- community and individual support to build and support wellbeing
- removal of trees assessed as being dead or dangerous
- installation of retaining walls and other structures to stabilise land
- development of plans and capability to implement a community wide drainage scheme to improve management of stormwater across the landscape
- works to stabilise landslide areas impacting the Great Ocean Road (GOR) and improve access
- facilitating the planning and rebuilding process
- building community infrastructure, such as the playground renewal and development of the river walk

Together with existing work, the initiatives included in this plan have been aligned to the community led Work Groups established by the CRC:

- Community Connection and Wellbeing
- Flora, Fauna and Beachscape
- Planning, Building and Fire
- Business and Tourism



1. Community Connection and Wellbeing

Initiatives under the general heading of *Community Connection and Wellbeing* address the first part of the Wye River and Separation Creek Community Statement

Wye River and Separation Creek is a small, inclusive and respectful community...

- *All community voices are valued and respected*

Initiatives undertaken and/or currently occurring include the following:

- support to community groups for local recovery activities – e.g. Little Street Libraries Project, community lunches, visitor information sheet
- support in seeking and obtaining funding and sourcing volunteers for community recovery activities
- community activities – Wye River CFA-led Christmas in July Lunch, Cup Weekend Community Lunch
- communications – Colac Otway Shire (COS) Bushfire Recovery Information Centre, face-to-face One Stop Shop appointments, Community Meetings, *WyeSep Connect* website and Facebook, Community Resilience Newsletter, direct emails, letters and media releases
- establishment of and support for the CRC and its four work groups
- emergency relief and re-establishment grants
- assistance with housing and temporary accommodation
- health and psychological support for individuals and groups
- referral to other required well-being support services
- increasing service provision capacity
- weed management and revegetation
- preparing an information and fact sheet for summer visitors

While initiatives responding to the particular needs of individuals continue to be required it is also apparent that initiatives that enable our community to come together are also very beneficial and essential



Renewal Plan Activities

Building and sustaining an inclusive and respectful community

Activity: Based on community input, develop and implement a community activity program that links to existing events and includes three community-wide events, potentially at Easter, the November Cup weekend and in late January

Outcome: An inclusive community that is looking after its collective and individual wellbeing

Lead & Partners: Community Connection and Wellbeing Work Group, CRC, with Wye River Surf Lifesaving Club (WRSLSC), Wye River Separation Creek Progress Association (PA), Wye River CFA, COS

Resources: COS has allocated resources to support a range of community activities until third quarter 2017. Funding for events beyond mid 2017 needs to be identified and the community will need to continue to provide in-kind support for all activities

Supporting individual people - maintaining capacity for individual counselling and other support services

Activity: Maintain the capacity for provision of individual and/or community support services, including access to emergency medical services

Outcome: Continuing care and support for people rebuilding and adjusting to the impact of the bushfire and landslip risks

Lead & Partners: Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with Lorne Hospital and COS

Resources: Funding is provided for support services to continue until May 2017, with a review of future needs to be undertaken in the first quarter of 2017

Reducing isolation - improving telecommunication via NBN and telecom services

Activity: Advocate for the Commonwealth Government to secure the provision of reliable mobile phone and NBN access. This will improve access to and contact with vital medical, emergency and other support services, and assist property owners with their rebuilding. This is also vital support for businesses

Outcome: Reliable mobile phone connection and access to internet services at all times

Lead & Partners: CRC, WRSLSC, PA, Wye River CFA, COS, Victorian Government and Federal Member for Corangamite

Resources: To be determined and sought

Maintaining capacity for community connection

Activity: The *WyeSep Connect* website and community email newsletter have played a key role over the last 12 months in enabling the broader community to maintain and build connections with one another, to keep up to date with issues and to participate in developments and renewal

Outcome: Effective communications are maintained

Lead & Partners: COS with government agencies

Resources: COS website and project specific targeted communications

Recognising connections with the community of Kennett River

Activity: Given the close connections between the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek and Kennett River, the community of Kennett River is invited to join in the development a plan for the wider community for 2018, with planning commencing in the second half of 2017

Outcome: Development of a community plan that recognizes the interconnection and interdependence of the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek and Kennett River

Lead & Partners: CRC, with PA, Kennett River Association (KRA), Wye River CFA, WRSLSC

Resources: Community representatives and associations, with support from COS



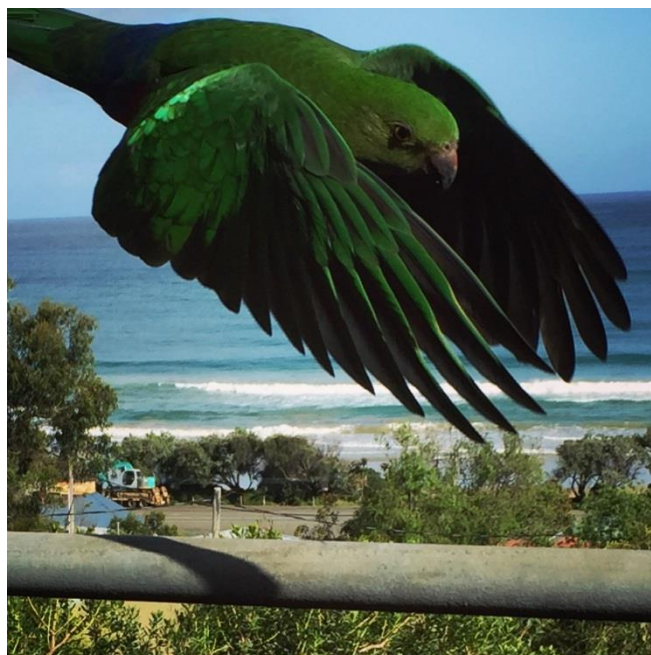
2. Flora, Fauna and Beachscape

Wye River and Separation Creek is a community in a place of great natural beauty that highly values the forest, beach and natural landscape and works to preserve and sustain them.

- *Natural beauty is enhanced by small scale and informal facilities*
- *Places high priority on indigenous flora and fauna*

Initiatives undertaken or currently underway include the following

- reinstatement of Paddy's Path
- delineation and upgrade of the Wye River Walk (in collaboration with the PA)
- weed management – short term
- planning for long term weed management, revegetation and feral pest control
- management of fire effected trees on municipal reserves
- hydro mulching of fire effected areas
- regeneration in Harrington Park
- reinstatement work at the Foreshore Caravan Park
- ongoing community activities such as plant advice and giveaways, replanting, bird observation day, weed management information
- monitoring waterways
- upgrade of the Wye Playground and establishment of a Fluker Post
- installation and administration of bird boxes and monitoring



Renewal Plan Activities

Replanting to renew flora and fauna

Activity: Develop a replanting and weed eradication/control plan to support a coordinated approach to landscape regeneration by property owners, COS, Southern Otway Landcare Network (SOLN) and DELWP that contributes to land stability, local character and the recovery of local fauna and flora

Outcome: The essential character of the community is restored and the landscape regenerated through the planting of a significant number of plants and trees each year for the next 4-5 years, encouraging the return of local fauna and flora species without unduly increasing bushfire risk; protecting and enhancing ecosystem health and biodiversity through a weed control program targeting identified high-risk species and priority areas; a monitoring program established to track the success of weed control and revegetation and associated community engagement, education, and support

Lead & Partners: Wye River Vegetation Restoration Committee, Flora, Fauna and Beachscape Work Group, COS with DELWP, Otway Coast Committee (OCC) VicRoads, Parks Victoria, SOLN, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) and potentially Greening Australia and private sector partners

Resources: DELWP has allocated initial seeding funding of \$30,000 to support weed control activities on public land in 2017. Resources required for replanting initiatives and comprehensive weed control need to be determined and identified based on the replanting and weed control plan and partnerships established

Monitor and maintain trees on Council owned and managed land

Activity: Implement a program of regular tree health monitoring and active management of remnant trees on COS owned or managed land to remove unsafe trees and actively manage remaining trees for longevity and habitat

Outcome: Trees on council owned land are actively managed with retention of as many viable trees as possible, whilst responding to public risk

Lead & Partners: COS

Resources: COS has commissioned and implemented an independent assessment of the health of trees on Council land including recommendations for the ongoing management of trees. Council will continue to implement the recommendations of this assessment throughout 2017

Re-open Harrington Park

Activity: Re-open Harrington Park following repair of fire damage

Outcome: Harrington Park is open for community use

Lead & partners: COS, with the Flora, Fauna and Beachscape Work Group

Resources: COS

Establish a demonstration fire-resistant garden

Activity: Assess the potential for the establishment of a demonstration fire-resistant garden

Outcome: Guidance and assistance is provided to property owners on the establishment and maintenance of indigenous fire resistant gardens

Lead & partners: COS with the Flora, Fauna and Beachscape Work Group

Resources: COS with the community

Improve beach access between Wye River and Separation Creek

Activity: Advocate for improved beach access between Wye River and Separation Creek at high tide and thereby ensure there is safe pedestrian access between Wye River and Separation Creek if landslip occurs along Paddy's Path and/or the Great Ocean Road is closed causing residents to be isolated. This would also provide a new walking loop incorporating Paddy's Path

Outcome: Safe pedestrian access between Wye River and Separation Creek is provided at all times and isolation of residents is prevented

Lead & Partners: CRC

Resources: Advocacy is required to secure funding for this activity

Advocate for inclusion of the Donlevy Fitzpatrick estate in the Parks and Reserves Crown Estate

Activity: Land is currently for sale by the mortgagee in possession with expressions of interest due in March 2017. Its inclusion in the Parks and Reserves Crown Estate would protect the wildlife corridor around Wye River by removing a significant discontinuity in the Otway National Park inland from the town boundary. Its acquisition would protect flora and fauna, such as the rare Australian Grayling and Mudfish and assist the management of noxious weeds

Acquisition would also provide an opportunity to protect Indigenous historical sites

Acquisition of this land would enable the development of high value walking tracks and thereby contribute to the broader tourism strategy of encouraging tourists to stay overnight in the area

Outcome: 187 hectares of land acquired, rare indigenous fauna and flora protected and tourists encouraged to stay overnight in the area

Lead & Partners: CRC with other community associations

Resources: Advocacy is required to secure funding for this initiative



3. Planning, Building and Fire



The members of the community wish for Wye River and Separation Creek to be places where...

- *Natural beauty is enhanced by small scale and informal facilities*
- *Development is sympathetic to the environment and of minimal impact*
- *Risk is managed to balance amenity, public health and safety*

Initiatives undertaken or currently being undertaken include the following

- approval by COS of applications for rebuilding damaged or destroyed homes in a facilitated and streamlined fashion through the One Stop Shop process
- development and implementation of action to reduce the propensity for landslide and improve drainage across the community
- implementation of retaining walls and other soil mesh treatments to minimise further land movement above and below Paddy's Path
- completing the building of retaining walls in high risk areas on public and private land to maximise community safety
- repair of lower risk retaining walls by COS and private land owners
- restoration of roads to a standard appropriate to the weather and land conditions and construction of an emergency local-use-only road between Wye River and Separation Creek
- plans to develop a community based bushfire management plan for Wye River and Separation Creek

- development of a construction and traffic management plan to ensure access for property owners and trades people during the rebuilding of lost or damaged homes
- restoration of power and telecom services in Bass and Iluka Avenues - Action is being undertaken to enable residents to make a decision on a proposal from Powercor to restore services by underground or overhead cables



Renewal Plan Activities

Safer Together – place based planning to increase resilience against fire and the impact of natural events

Activity: Develop a Community Based Bushfire Management Plan for Wye River, Separation Creek, Kennett River and Grey River to increase resilience against bushfire and landslide risks. This will include identifying activities on public and private land, and within and outside community boundaries to reduce fire risk and increase community resilience. It will also raise awareness of the Expert Panel Guidelines for improving the resilience of new as well as the existing buildings and for the development of bushfire plans for each property owner and/or resident

Outcome: A Community Bushfire Management Plan, agreed by the communities of Wye River, Separation Creek, Kennett River and Grey River, and that is supported by DELWP and COS, which can be implemented through ongoing land management, fuel reduction, and built form management that progressively lifts the resilience of the community and reduces the impact of any future bushfire and landslip

Lead & Partners: COS, with DELWP, the Planning, Building and Fire Work Group, CFA (local brigade, District 6 and South West Region), and Parks Victoria

Resources: DELWP will lead establishment of a community partnership in early 2017 and will support the initiative through 2017 via a Strategic Partnerships Facilitator, a Wye River and Separation Creek engagement support officer (until 30 June 2017) and other technical support

Facilitating rebuilding

Activity: Implement a traffic management plan to facilitate house rebuilding and repair activity and access to surviving homes, while maintaining amenity for owners of existing homes

Outcome: Effective traffic and vehicle management during the period of main construction activity including safe use of local roads, vehicle turning circles, streamlined permit processes for heavy vehicle access, and resolution of on-site logistics and access requirements in a proactive way

Lead & Partners: COS, with VicRoads

Resources: COS has engaged consultants. Development of the plan commenced in November 2016 and is to be implemented by COS in early 2017

Securing reliability of access

Activity: Implement capital and maintenance works to support the reliable operation of the GOR, safe and effective use of north-south access routes and effective communication concerning the status of road access. Secure local, alternate access between Wye River and Separation Creek

Outcome: GOR operational reliability improved with more effective communication about the status of the road, effective north-south access routes maintained and emergency access between Wye River and Separation Creek provided for

Lead & Partners: VicRoads, with COS

Resources: State and Commonwealth Governments have together provided approximately \$150m for the repair and maintenance of the GOR from Torquay to Peterborough. VicRoads is currently undertaking works to maintain the GOR, including the construction of retaining walls between Wye River and Separation Creek. COS is currently restoring and will implement improvements to local roads as appropriate

Implementing drainage works to manage stormwater

Activity: Develop and implement a community wide stormwater drainage scheme

Outcome: With appropriate community consultation, stormwater across the community is managed to mitigate the risk of uncontrolled stormwater impacting land stability and with legal points of water discharge for private properties resolved. Interference with the landscape is minimised

Lead & Partners: COS, with VicRoads, DEWLP and OCC

Resources: Funding provided by State Government. COS has engaged consultants and work has commenced on the overall stormwater plan for implementation in 2017-18

Monitor and forecast development activity

Activity: Implement a survey of intention to build on a recurring basis to assess future development activity and inform logistical support plans and to support community awareness of overall extent and timing of rebuilding activity

Outcome: Improved capability to support effective rebuilding activity and streamline logistical support required

Lead & Partners: COS

Resources: COS to continue to track and forecast development activity as part of usual business. A Rebuilding Intentions Survey was conducted in February 2017

Ensure accurate land information to support rebuilding

Activity: Secure current air photography and geographic information services to support private and public sector development works and activities

Outcome: Up to date aerial photography to inform ongoing land management and development activities, as well as securing historical record of change over time

Lead & Partners: DELWP, with COS and VicRoads

Resources: Funding provided by DELWP to capture updated air photography in late 2016 and mid-2017



4. Business and Tourism

- *Natural beauty is enhanced by small scale and informal facilities*
- *Development is sympathetic to the environment and of minimal impact*

Current initiatives supporting business and tourism are directed at larger towns along the Great Ocean Road, for example to Lorne, Apollo Bay, and Anglesea and to the Otways in general. Local smaller activities have however, included funding for a 'Showcasing Local Trades and Services Event', the 'Wye Pub to Club Walk/Run', for a Wye to Wongarra Tourism Destination Action Plan via GORRT and investigation of the potential to extend the Great Ocean Road Walk and other walking tracks around the townships.

The Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnerships Group has identified the need for a concerted focus on long-term sustainable management of the GOR, for regional access and links to the regional economy as a top priority for action in 2017.

The environmental impact of all business and tourism infrastructure should be minimized to maintain and enhance our fragile post-fire environment and to maintain the character and boundaries of Wye River and Separation Creek.

Renewal Plan Activities

Extension of Great Ocean Road Walk

Activity: Advocate for the extension of the Great Ocean Road Walk from Apollo Bay to Torquay

Outcome: Support for long-term feasibility analysis of the opportunities and impacts of the extension of the walk

Lead & Partners: Business and Tourism Work Group, with Regional Development Victoria (RDV), Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORRT) and Shires and Municipalities through which the GOR passes

Resources: Advocacy is required to secure funding to undertake the feasibility and impact analysis as a first step

Wye River Walking Tracks

Activity: Plan and build walking tracks in Wye River along former logging rail and more recent fire tracks, including the Rail Trail Loop adjacent to Wye River, provide mapping and signage of local tracks and roads that may be suitable for walks and investigate the potential formation of a walk from Separation Creek to the Jamison River camping reserve using the original walking track linking Wye River to Lorne

Outcome: Recreational activities developed to encourage tourism and the health and wellbeing of residents

Lead & Partners: Business and Tourism Work Group, with Parks Victoria, COS and PA

Resources: To be confirmed with Parks Victoria with the Rail Trail loop being an achievable alignment subject to further planning and approvals. The potential trail to Jamison River requires feasibility assessment and identification of resources to be progressed

Economic activity along the Great Ocean Road

Activity: Continue to advocate for a coordinated leadership, investment and communications approach to the GOR in partnership with State and local government and business leaders

Outcome: Improved confidence in reliable regional access, accurate targeted communications when the GOR is impacted by incidents, with a clear focus on a coordinated effort and resourcing to ensure sustainable management of the road

Lead & Partners: GORRT, with local tourism associations, local businesses, the Business and Tourism Work Group, Barwon and Great South Coast Regional Partnership, OCC, Visit Victoria, COS, Surf Coast Shire, Regional Development Victoria (RDV), the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources and VicRoads

Resources: Funding for future marketing and communication initiatives needs to be identified

Improving tourist infrastructure on the Great Ocean Road (Wye River and Separation Creek Section)

Activity: Advocate for improving the basic infrastructure on the GOR near Wye River and Separation Creek that is essential for tourists, such as toilets and rubbish collection

Outcome: The basic infrastructure and services expected by tourists to the GOR is in place and is maintained and is consistent with the character of the GOR

Lead & Partners: VicRoads, OCC with COS, Surf Coast Shire, DELWP and RDV

Resources: State and Commonwealth Governments

All renewal activities included in this document must be delivered in a manner consistent with the community developed and owned statement of values and principles.



5. Where To From Here?

A Period of Transition

In the aftermath of the fire, large-scale contracts were let for the clean-up of destroyed houses, to make the community safe and to establish the conditions necessary for redevelopment and repair activity on private land. Through this period, a range of special arrangements were put in place to facilitate agency and community action on the issues at hand.

We are now entering into a new period in the recovery of the community during which a range of activities have been or will shortly be completed, such as Victorian Government retaining wall construction. Other activities, such as local road reconstruction and maintenance, and erosion and sediment control temporary measures, will transition back to COS, albeit within the context of achieving the longer term vision the community of Wye River and Separation Creek has identified.

The strong presence that Grocon has had in the community will phase out in the first quarter of 2017. The presence of COS will increase as it leads delivery of construction projects, including building retaining walls and the reticulated drainage scheme, and provides support for rebuilding activity. COS will continue to support community-led activities, as well as providing the normal council services such as planning and building.

COS will now be the lead level of government working with the community to implement renewal strategies and projects. COS will be supported in this role by Victorian Government agencies and departments and the legislative responsibility for recovery will remain with the Emergency Management Commissioner.

As part of this transition the community of Wye River and Separation Creek has needed to think about how it wishes the role and work of the CRC and the Community Representatives to reflect the changing situation to ensure effective and continuing community input into the renewal of Wye River and Separation Creek.

To assist this process, the CRC Community Representatives convened a meeting with the primary community associations¹ on 15 January 2017 to start the discussion. The outcomes of this meeting were presented and discussed at the Community Forum facilitated by the PA on 22 January 2017.

The consensus from this discussion was that the CRC is seen to play a critical coordinating role for the community and that this role should continue but evolve over the coming 12 months.

Given the changing relationship of the State agencies and COS in the renewal of the community, the evolution of the CRC will take place as follows.

1. The CRC will continue in its role and function but its membership will change. The community representatives of the CRC will continue as members and be joined by representatives from the primary community associations (PA, Wye River CFA, KRA, and WRSLSC). COS and EMV will no longer participate as members of the CRC, but along with other Government agencies, such as DELWP, OCC, RDV,

¹ Kennett River Association, Wye River and Separation Creek Progress Association, Wye River CFA and Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

and VicRoads, will be invited to attend and participate in meetings as required.

The first CRC meeting with the new membership will take place in April

2. Committee representatives will continue to meet regularly with the Deputy Secretary Forest, Fire and Regions, DELWP, as well as provide a quarterly report on progress to Minister Neville's Office and raise issues as required
3. In September 2017, a review of the Renewal Plan will be undertaken by the new committee in consultation with the community
4. By December 2017, a draft plan for 2018 for the wider community, including Kennett River, Separation Creek and Wye River, will be developed and released for community discussion
5. Discussion of the draft community plan for 2018 will occur at the Community Forum in January 2019 and this plan will be finalised by March 2019

