

# Otway Complex Fires Recovery Newsletter

Issue 4 – 27 April 2026

## A word from the Community Recovery Officer

Thanks for the incredibly warm welcome to your community as I started 4 weeks ago as your Community Recovery Officer.

I have loved getting to meet you and find out more about what's needed to help the fire recovery process.

Navigating the maze of resources and support can be tricky, so I am here to help provide advice and link you relevant services.

I'm also keen to advocate for your needs on your behalf.

Please drop into the hub based at Gellibrand beside GelliHouse.

My regular hours are Monday 10am to 4pm, Wednesday 12.30pm to 4pm and Thursday 10am to 4pm.

Plus I will be connecting into other communities across the Otways through your existing community groups and networks.

Reach out if you want me to pay a visit.

A priority for many includes replacing fencing, pasture renewal, livestock health, plumbing replacement, water tank refills and cleaning. Income impacts and business recovery along with insurance concerns are also top of mind.

My role is to make sure you can access information to help you get back on track.

Call Bridie on 0477 642 079 or email [bridie.walsh@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:bridie.walsh@colacotway.vic.gov.au) to be linked to services that can support your recovery process.

## Not sure if you're under-insured? Get advice

The [areyoucovered.vic.gov.au](http://areyoucovered.vic.gov.au) website provides helpful advice on navigating insurance claim processes.

It's also important to know, if you're unhappy with your insurer's decision, you can ask for your claim to be reviewed.

You may be eligible for free legal advice via [financialrights.org.au](http://financialrights.org.au) (call 1300 663 464) or [consumeraction.org.au](http://consumeraction.org.au) or [disasterlegalhelp.org.au](http://disasterlegalhelp.org.au) (call 1800 113 432).



## No Community Lunch on Wednesday 29 April

Due to power outage this Wednesday 29 April there will be no lunches at the Gellibrand Neighbourhood House.

They will commence again from Wednesday 6 May at 12.30pm. All welcome.

## Agriculture Victoria Upcoming Events and Webinars

- **29 April 2026**  
Plan it Right: Practical stock containment that works
- **30 April 2026**  
Whole farm planning course EOI
- **12 May 2026**  
Upskilling Agribusiness for the future: Bank applications and reviews

For a full list of events and webinars visit: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/event-listing](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/event-listing)



### Ladies Who Lunch

Our beautiful Wednesday luncheon ladies from left to right, Mandy, Merri, Lina, Jean and Wendy, served up delicious chicken, roasted veggies and potato bake alongside ridiculously good dessert including bead'n'butter pudding, berry-topped sponge and chocolate cake.

Wednesday lunches at GelliHouse are a great opportunity to take a break, connect and share stories.

### Road to Resilience Podcast

The Road to Resilience podcast may help if you have been impacted by an emergency. It provides practical advice you can use when it suits you.

Episode 1 explores the emotions people have after an emergency. It features a story about flood recovery.

Episode 2 focuses on children, families and trauma. It features what trauma can look like for children and adults and has advice on the recovery process.

Episode 3 discusses how to exposure to information during and after an emergency impacts mental health and wellbeing. It explains where to get the most up to date information and includes strategies for avoiding overload.

Visit <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/coping-emergencies-and-disasters> to find out where to listen to the Road to Resilience Podcast.



### Bushfire Recovery Citizen Science

The Atlas of Living Australia, the Australian Citizen Science Association and CSIRO have worked together to produce the Citizen Science Bushfire Project Finder.

After serious bushfires, scientists are under the pump to produce research about the fires, and how the recovery process occurs. While they're working hard to produce important results, there's not a lot of spare time for them to get into the field and gather important data. That's where you can help.

Projects span across biodiversity, land, air and water so there's something to suit everyone's interests.

By getting involved in a citizen science project, you will be making a big difference to bushfire recovery. The information, data, and resources you collect feeds straight back to the scientists for their current and future research. While researchers are busy working on bushfire recovery efforts, they don't have a lot of time to go into the field and collect the much-needed data.

Visit [www.csiro.au/en/work-with-us/citizen-science/Citizen-Science-Bushfire-Recovery](http://www.csiro.au/en/work-with-us/citizen-science/Citizen-Science-Bushfire-Recovery) to find a project you can participate in



BlazeAid volunteers celebrating at the Carlisle River Thank You Day on Saturday 28 March, which held to recognise the community's efforts during and after the January fires.



Steve, centre, from Blaze Aid and other volunteers at the Carlisle River community celebration. Steve left for Western Australia on Sunday and is replaced by Sandy.

## BlazeAid Update

### BlazeAid continues to support farmers and Otways residents who lost fencing in the fires.

Volunteers are helping communities rebuild and repair damaged fences and provide other practical assistance.

To date, more than 30 farmers have been supported.

If you need help or want to get involved, contact Sandy on 0439 890 538 or visit [www.blazeaid.com.au](http://www.blazeaid.com.au)

## Working together to support community recovery

Members of the local Colac Otway recovery team, along with Emergency Management Victoria, recently took part in a disaster recovery workshop at the Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre (COPACC).

The workshop was organised by community-focused organisations including Disaster Legal Help Victoria, the Victorian Council of Social Service and Financial Counselling Victoria.

Around 50 people attended, coming from more than 30 different organisations, services and government bodies that support communities after disasters including organisations like the Australian Red Cross.

Coming together like this helps everyone understand how to better support people who have been affected by disasters. Recovery can look different for each person and family, and it often involves practical help, emotional support, legal or financial advice, and help navigating services.

For our local recovery agencies, the workshop was a great chance to learn, share local experiences, and build relationships with others who are working in this space.

These connections mean we can work more smoothly together and help people access support more easily when they need it.

We want the community to know that we are always looking for ways to improve how we support people after disasters.

By learning from others and strengthening partnerships across the state, we are helping to build a more connected, informed and resilient recovery network, so our community can move forward and get back on its feet.

## Recovery support available at Gellibrand and Carlisle River

**The Emergency Recovery Support Program (ERSP), delivered by Colac Area Health, offers free, practical support to help you get back on track.**

- Work out next steps
- Access financial, legal and government supports
- Get help with forms, calls & follow-ups
- We'll be at Gellibrand Community House and Carlisle River Primary School.

Come and chat with us, no appointment needed.

Can't make it at that time? Call us on: 5232 5325, ask for the Emergency Recovery Support Team, leave your number and we will call you back to arrange a time to come and visit you.

