

# Standard

INCORPORATING THE ALEXANDRA TIMES - THE YARCK, GOBUR, TAGGERTY, THORNTON, AND ACHERON EXPRESS

P.O Box 5, Alexandra, 3714. Ph: (03) 5772 1002; Fax: (03) 5772 1603; Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au Wednesday, January 21, 2026 \$2.00 inc. GST

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## INSIDE THIS WEEK'S EDITION

Alexandra Fire Brigade experiences



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Weekend sport



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This old Alexandra souvenir has been in Tamie's family for a long time. She found it in what was left of their house. -Tamie Power

## A terrifying and devastating fire

THEY say that a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon rainforest can cause a tiny change to the atmosphere, potentially leading to huge and unpredictable differences in the environment. Small actions, whether intended or not, can have enormous consequences.

In Longwood, a tiny fire started by the side of the Hume Freeway on Thursday, January 8 and soon became a monstrous firestorm, changing the lives of so many people in many of our small communities.

The Longwood fire swept through Tarcombe and Creightons Creek before it moved into Ruffy, decimating everything in its path. It didn't stop there. Terip Terip, Gobur, Kanumbra, Yarck, Fawcett, Koriella, Highlands, Cavet, Cathkin, Dropmore. So many communities and farms were impacted.

According to the Incident Control Centre, as of Sunday, January 18, 309 homes and

822 outbuildings have been lost in the Longwood fire.

In Murrindindi Shire, 190 homes have been lost and 10 significantly damaged. There has also been damage to 519 other structures.

852 properties in Murrindindi were saved through firefighting in efforts. 3840km of fencing has been lost in the Longwood fire and 24,120 stock. Assessments are ongoing.

Farmer Max Hobson from Terip Terip tragically lost his life in Gobur due to the fire.

Three people reported missing in the Longwood area were located safe.

It's been a shocking time, but the community is doing everything they can to support friends, family and strangers impacted by the disaster. To the people impacted, we are there for you and we will do everything we can to help you.

## Important bushfire relief and recovery resources

Essential bushfire relief and recovery resources are available on my website.

For the latest advice on active fires, please continue to monitor the VicEmergency app.



**Helen Haines MP**

Wangaratta: 117 Murphy Street, Wangaratta | 03 5721 7077  
 Wodonga: 79 High Street, Wodonga | 02 6024 6284  
[helen.haines.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:helen.haines.mp@aph.gov.au) | [helenhaines.org](http://helenhaines.org)

Authorised by Helen Haines, 117 Murphy St, Wangaratta VIC 3677.



## Alexandra Newspaper's office will be CLOSED MONDAY, JANUARY 26

**Deadline for classifieds artwork and bookings (deaths, funerals, meetings, for sale etc) for the edition of January 28 will be Friday, January 23 at 2pm.**

**General advertising and Trades deadlines for bookings and artwork will remain unchanged. Editorial deadlines remain unchanged.**

**Alexandra District Health**  
**5772 0900**  
 Yea & District Memorial Hospital  
**5736 0400**  
**In an emergency dial 000**

**Standard The Yea Chronicle**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

**CLASSIFIEDS AND COMMERCIAL PRINTING**  
 reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

**MANAGER AND ACCOUNTS** Karen Morrison  
 manager@alexandranewspapers.com.au  
 accounts@alexandranewspapers.com.au

**ADVERTISING**  
 1sales@alexandranewspapers.com.au

**TRADES and ONLINE DIRECTORY - Mary**  
 trades@alexandranewspapers.com.au

**EDITOR** Anne Richey  
 editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au  
 (Bailey) journalist@alexandranewspapers.com.au

**SPORTS**  
 sports@alexandranewspapers.com.au

43 Grant Street - PO Box 5, Alexandra 3714  
 Telephone: 5772 1002 Fax: 5772 1603  
 Hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday

**ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS**

**PUBLISHERS**

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**THUMBS UP THUMBS DOWN**

**THUMBS UP:** To Chantelle and Terry for looking after Mark Perry and organising an ambulance to help in when he had a fall at home. What a great job they both did.

**THUMBS UP:** To Eildon Post Office for opening earlier and closing later to align with the Eildon Grocer trading hours. The Grocer has been without internet, so consequently cash only purchases. Extra opening hours from the post office has enabled residents to obtain cash out to purchase groceries. Good on ya Debbie.

**THUMBS UP:** To Kellock Lodge skeleton staff who took in another 30 at risk elderly and provided meals and accommodation when they only had a few staff to help. Administration worked 6am to 9pm in all sectors without a day off in order to support their staff. Congratulations to all who stayed to help including Ian Gibb.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down is a reader's contribution section of Alexandra Newspapers. Send your Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down to editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au

Contributions will be edited and/or published at the Editor's discretion. We request that this section not be used as a slander attack on persons, businesses or property

**Letters to the Editor**

**UGFM**

UGFM and all its presenters, with their calm and warm presentation of regular updates have provided the Alexandra community and those of us who live away from the town, the most valuable information and reassurance during the past days of drama and uncertainty.

What a professional operation, never skipping a beat as each challenge arose, the power going off, Telstra connections going down, the concerns about water pressure and most significantly the rapid spread of the fire as it advanced towards Alexandra. With father choosing to stay in the town, the reassurance of UGFM and its presenters, did much to calm nerves, particularly as the ABC did not seem to have any information or attention to the southern spread of the fire.

A huge thank you to everyone, both front and back of house at UGFM. You all deserve a medal.

*Jane Sharwood, Gisborne*

**Alexandra Lions Club**

I APPEAL to people affected by the fires in the area contact Alexandra Lions Club to arrange for relief, hay, and fencing material for burnt fence restoration.

We need to learn about your losses so we can do our best to supply materials for urgent needs as soon as possible. Alexandra Lions are ready to serve the community especially at times like now due to the current disaster.

We may be able to assist in many different ways, especially in regard to fencing, or fodder for farmers and for those who have lost belongings, sheds or houses.

Please call Secretary Alexandra Lions Club, John Beale, on 0427 595 318 and we can list your needs and endeavour to provide any assistance you may require.

*John Beale, Alexandra*

**Premier**

WE have been through a catastrophic fire. Most of us were told to evacuate but some stayed to fight the fires and rescue stock, property and those that elected to stay in their homes. My sincere thanks to all front-liners and volunteers who worked tirelessly and at times your lives were in danger. At the very least you all deserve a medal and remuneration of some sort especially those whose properties were damaged while protecting ours.

In good Murrindindi spirit there were offers of temporary accommodation with some offering to take pets, chickens even horses. Loans of generators and free furniture and appliances for those that have to start again. There were those defending their properties, the fire bearing down on them. Their prayers miraculously answered avoiding devastation when the fire changed course. Unfortunately not all were spared.

Our Premier came to Alexandra hospital once the all clear to return had been given. Understandably some of the locals weren't thrilled to see her having raised concerns about fuel buildup in forests, aging fire fighting equipment and lack of support for volunteers earlier in the year. Had it not been for a coincidental loss of internet, mobile and cable phones that all went out upon her arrival and restored as the premier departed there may have been more locals hoping to talk but at least when communications were restored the first trucks loaded with hay began arriving in town.

It's a privilege to live in such a functioning community as the Murrindindi. Well done.

*Tom Collins, Alexandra*

**COMMUNITY DIARY**

**Alexandra District Health**  
 5772 0900  
 Non-emergency police assistance  
 131 444  
**EMERGENCY 000**

**Local Radio Frequency**  
 UGFM 106.9 Alexandra / Lake Eildon  
 UGFM 98.5 Marysville / Lake Mountain

**MONTHLY COMMUNITY GROUPS**

**WEEKLY**

Tue Women's Walk @ 7am @Embassy of Ideas  
 Wed Oasis Church, free coffee connection Ph 0408 123 581  
 Fri Man Walk @ 7am meet at RSL Hall  
 Fri Communitea 10am-12pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801  
 Sun Alex & Dist Dog Obedience, training. Ph 0456 583 611  
 Sun AA meeting: 7pm St Johns Hall. Ph 1300 22 22 22.

**MONTHLY**

1<sup>st</sup> Wed Alexandra Lions dinner meet, Corner Hotel 0427 595 318  
 1<sup>st</sup> Thur Murrindindi Men 6-8pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801  
 1<sup>st</sup> Sun Crop/Produce swap 10.30am-noon @ Embassy of Ideas  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Tue Alexandra District Garden Society Meeting Ph 5772 2285  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed Alex Lions business meeting, rear RSL hall 0427 595 318  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Thu Alexandra Ladies Probud 10am RSL Ph 0428 976 252  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Thu Community Potluck dinner 6-8pm @ Embassy of Ideas  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun Alexandra RSL Ph 0409 950 913  
 4<sup>th</sup> Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.  
 4<sup>th</sup> Thu Alexandra Redgate CWA Meeting 1pm, Ph 0402 804 517  
 Last Fri Carers Group 10am Grant Street Grocer. 0418 402 455

**ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS**

For a \$10 annual fee for one line, your club or organisation's regular meeting dates will be listed each week. Not only is this a reminder to your regular members but also a good source of what groups are available in the community, when they meet and a contact phone number.

**Relief Drinking Water program**

IF you rely on tank water and your water supplies have been emptied for firefighting or been contaminated, you may be eligible for up to 20,000L in replacement relief water.

Find out more and apply at [water.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/news-stories/emergency-relief-drinking-water-2026](http://water.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/news-stories/emergency-relief-drinking-water-2026)

For assistance, call DEECA on 136 186.

**RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT**

STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon (TW)	11.00AM Mon	2.19	LGH	steady
Rubicon River at Rubicon	11.00AM Mon	0.44	LGH	steady
Acheron River at Taggerty	11.00AM Mon	0.47	LGH	steady
Home Creek at Yarck			LGH	
Yea River at Devlins Bridge	11.25AM Mon	0.43	LGH	steady
Murrindindi River Above Colwells	11.00AM Mon	0.25	LGH	steady
Yea R at Old Killingworth Rd	11.00AM Mon	0.43	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin	12.00PM Mon	4.06	LGH	steady
King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale	11.00AM Mon	0.31	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Trawool	11.00AM Mon	1.80	LGH	steady
Sunday Creek at Tallarook	11.00AM Mon	0.01	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Seymour	11.00AM Mon	2.02	LGH	steady
Whiteheads Creek at Seymour	11.00AM Mon	0.79	LGH	steady

**\*ISSUED AT 12:09 PM AEDT MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2026**

**ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS**

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**  
 can be submitted via email to  
 editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au or  
 reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au  
 or by mail to Alexandra Newspapers  
 PO Box 5, Alexandra 3714.

Letters **must be 300 words or less**. We will not publish defamatory letters, or content which is offensive, threatening or containing personal attacks. Submitted letters may be edited before going to print.

All letters must contain writers name, address and contact number. (not necessarily for publication). Letters without these details supplied cannot not be published. Deadline for Letters to the Editor is 9am Monday.

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**Standard The Yea Chronicle**

**Weekly Weather**  
 January 21 - January 27, 2026

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

**Alexandra Yea**

DAY	LOW	HIGH	DAY	LOW	HIGH
Wednesday	13	28	Wednesday	13	28
Thursday	10	24	Thursday	9	23
Friday	15	31	Friday	15	31
Saturday	19	35	Saturday	20	35
Sunday	18	34	Sunday	17	35
Monday	19	36	Monday	19	37
Tuesday	18	36	Tuesday	17	36

**Standard The Yea Chronicle**

**DISTRICT RAINFALL**

Alexandra	0mm
Buxton	0mm
Eildon (AWS)	0mm
Flowerdale	0mm
Jamieson	N/Amm
Kinglake	N/Amm
Lake Eildon	11mm
Mansfield	N/Amm
Taggerty	0mm
Yarck	0mm
Yea	N/Amm

Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday

**LAKE EILDON**

Height above sea level this week	274.09m
Capacity as at 9am Monday	51.9%
Metres below full supply	14.81m
Daily inflow	500ML
Release	6000ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change)	88%

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**DEADLINES**

Real Estate	Thursday 5pm
Trades & Services	Thursday noon
Early General News	Thursday 5pm
Classifieds	Monday noon
Editorial	Monday 9am
Sports Editorial	Monday 10am
Letters to the Editor	Monday 9am
Thumbsup/down	Monday 10am

If you have any enquiries please do not hesitate to contact the office on

5772 1002 or  
 reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

We thank you for your continued support



First Lieutenant Haydn Simpson, Captain Chris Lynch and active firefighter Mick Van Heuzen. -AR

# Alexandra Fire Brigade: Facing a monster

ALEXANDRA Fire Brigade Captain, Chris Lynch, has done an amazing job, protecting Alexandra from the monster fire. The whole community is very proud of everything that the CFA did during the fire, across the region.

He said, "Saving Alexandra was the priority. Unfortunately, anything outside of that we had to deal with after. Unfortunately, we lost a house in Halls Flat Road, which happened to be a CFA member."

He added, "I know a lot of other firefighters lost their houses and feel pretty broken for them."

He said of the planning, "We had a plan and we executed that plan the best we could and we couldn't have done it without all the strike teams and people that came in on that day. The sector commander for Alexandra was Jay Williams. He smashed it. He did an amazing job."

Jay created the plan in the first place, and "It's a plan that he'd been drilling into our heads for the last 10 years or whatever. We just executed that plan and not only did he do that, he's been working tirelessly up the hill to try and contain the top of it. With his skills and knowledge and basically my right hand man for this, or I was his right hand man more the point.

"Everyone came here in that morning and that morning was just so scary. The wind had started, we knew the fire wasn't far away and then we were told that it was that the fire was 12 kilometres away and then it was an hour away. We had progressive intel, but it wasn't

accurate, so we didn't actually know when it was coming in. But when it came in, it hit like a freight train and the strike teams held their line. They held the fire. It did jump at Swann Road, but managed to get it back just before the ICC building there, the DEECA building. It was just a horrible day."

He added, "To my guys, I just can't thank them enough for their just dedication to stop this beast. They stopped it. Nothing stopped them. They put themselves in front of it. And they just did what they had to do. All our families were evacuated and all we had was this CFA family. It makes you incredibly proud to be a part of that CFA family when stuff like this happens."

He was incredibly grateful that so many people had evacuated prior to the fire. "It makes our job a lot easier, not having to worry about that and concentrate on what we need to," he said.

"We would have saved 60 houses just on the night before, just between Kanumbra-Gobur Road and up there. I know Terip Terip got hit it pretty hard," he said.

It was terrible that a man died in the blaze, farmer Max Hobson. It was one life too many, but fortunate that there were no other deaths.

Chris was keen to mention the station's auxiliary group, "A group of ladies and fellas. They have cooked, cleaned, fed, made sure everyone's welcome and doesn't leave here without a full stomach. They're our support brigade and it's just phenomenal effort they've put in. They weren't on the front line, but they

were certainly the front line here. And to me, that's probably a bigger job. They would have fed thousands of people. We could have had 30, 40 trucks in the immediate area at one time, plus DEECA, plus SES have been assisting. They haven't even blinked at it, 'Right, this is what we've got to do. We'll just get it done.' And they've fed everyone and everyone's been happy.

"What I've found is that the station has been the safe place for a lot of people. They've just come up here and we've been able to feed the public and emergency services."

"We've had an amazing amount of donations, whether it's monetary or food or bits and pieces, hygiene packs and all that sort of stuff... Whoever's come in here has been welcomed. I think some people just come down here for a chat, to be honest. They know someone's going to be here.

"Also, a massive shout out to my brigade management team for the work they've put in. logistics and organising crews and getting crews out on trucks and managing to get us a couple of rest days over the last couple of days... Most of us were at breaking point. We were stretched to the max.

He added that the families of CFA members are "a part of the fire brigade. The families and the support what I've seen from wives and kids and all that, especially kids that don't understand, just seeing a parent hold their child is why we do this, because you just kept the community and the future of this town alive. I suppose that's the underlying

reason why we do it. The community and our children and the future.

"It's not lost on me that we still have a community here and some don't. So we're broken for them, we're absolutely shattered for them, but you know the whole community will wrap their arms around them and you know they do their best to make sure they're okay," he said.

The interview took place on Thursday, January 16. Asked for an update on the status, he said, "It's far from contained. In our little area, we've probably got it reasonably wrapped up here. And we're in the rebuild and recovery phase of the fire. But the fire is certainly still angry in other places." This includes towards Merton and Longwood.

"We're only just starting summer, which is scary. We're still so dry," he said.

His advice was, "Maintain your house, especially during summer. Keep your gutters cleared, keep your lawns low, watered if you can, and have your bushfire plan ready and know your trigger points of when you're going to leave."

Chris commented, "Everyone's supporting each other. So, I think it shows the true grit that's in society. When things are down, people step up."

The town will be forever grateful for the efforts of our local firefighters, from all of the brigades which took part in the fight, as well as heavy machinery operators, SES, Forest Fire Management, and all other individuals and organisations that helped out.

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Cindy  
**McLEISH** MP  
STATE MEMBER FOR EILDON

Shop 10, 38-40 Bell Street, Yarra Glen  
03 9730 1066 f CindyMcLeishMP  
cindy.mcleish@parliament.vic.gov.au

Authorised by Cindy McLeish MP, Shop 10, 38-40 Bell Street, Yarra Glen.

## Church Services

**ANGLICAN**  
**St Johns Alexandra**  
 9am Eucharist each Sunday  
 Children welcome.  
 Rev Mario Hendricks -  
 Rectory 0435 953 777

**CATHOLIC**  
 Immaculate Conception Parish  
 Parish Administrator Fr Jose Mathew.  
 Presbytery 0468 810 871  
 St Matthews Eildon, Saturday 5pm  
 Alexandra, Sunday 8.45am  
 Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

**UNITING CHURCH In Australia**  
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 Contact 5772 2362

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 Loving God, Loving People,  
 Loving Life  
 118 Grant Street, Alexandra  
 0408 123 581  
 Meeting every Sunday @ 10am

**MOUNT CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY  
 BAPTIST CHURCH**  
 37 Grant Street, Alexandra  
 Pastor Daniel Kriss  
 Services 10am every Sunday  
 Phone 0400 282 536  
 mccb.com.au

**THE VINE**  
 A Christian community part of the Baptist  
 Union of Victoria  
 Sunday 4.30pm service  
 Kids program during school term  
 Meets at St Andrew's, 37 Downey Street,  
 Alexandra  
 Contact - 0438 642 559

# Statement from Mayor on the Longwood Fire Emergency Event

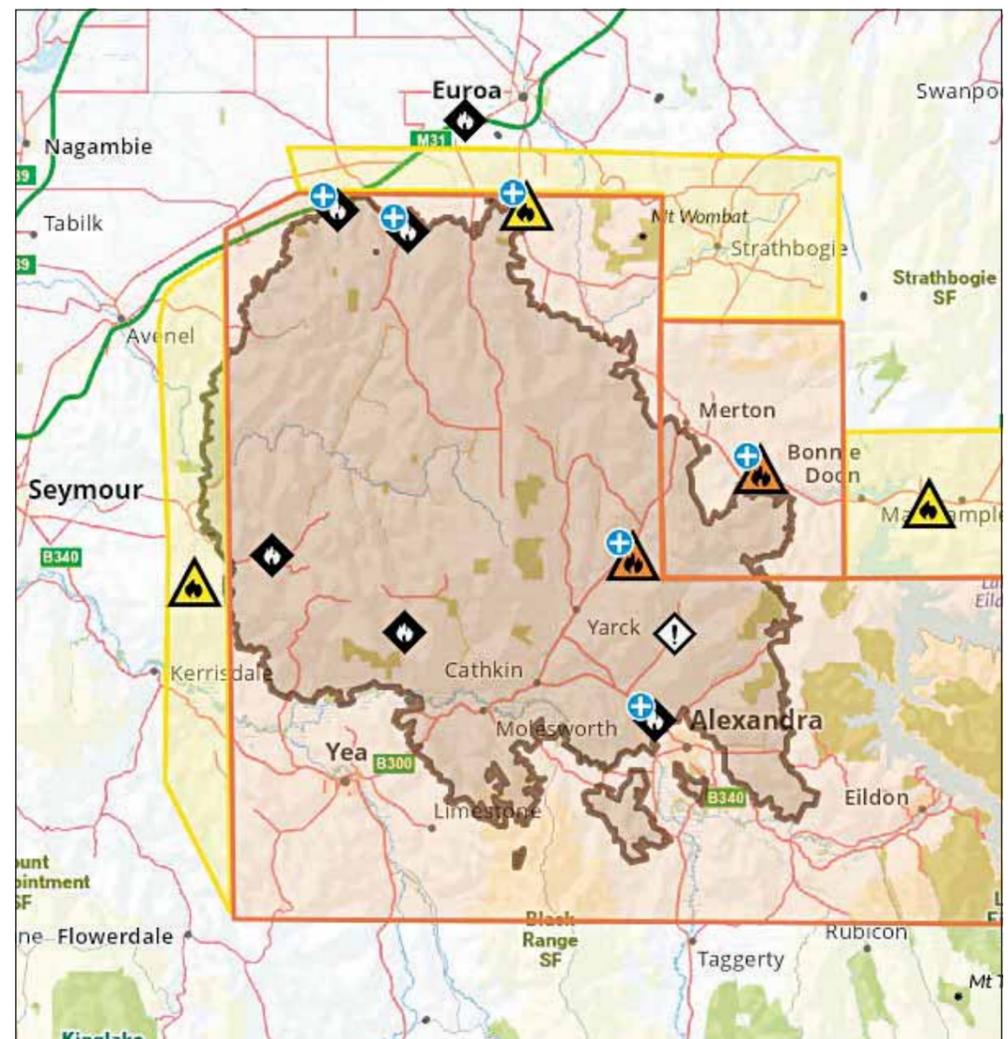
*Cr Damien Gallagher, Mayor Murrindindi  
 Shire Council*

MURRINDINDI Shire Council extends its heartfelt support to everyone affected by the current fire event across our shire and surrounding regions.

This is one of the largest and most complex fire events our community has faced in many years. The situation remains dynamic and challenging, and we are still firmly in the emergency response phase. Conditions have been demanding for emergency services, council staff and volunteers, and this will continue for some time yet.

Council's thoughts are with all residents, farmers, businesses and visitors who are experiencing loss, uncertainty and disruption. We know this is a deeply difficult time. While full impact assessments are not yet possible, it is already clear that many people have been significantly affected, including damage to property, community infrastructure and livestock. To those impacted, please know that you are not alone and that support is available.

I want to acknowledge and sincerely thank the emergency service personnel, volunteers



*The fireground map on Friday, January 16, a week after the fire burnt out a huge swathe of land in Murrindindi Shire and beyond. -S*

and agencies who continue to work around the clock to protect lives and property. The dedication shown by the Country Fire Authority (CFA), State Emergency Service (SES), Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic), Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and our partner agencies has been extraordinary. Equally, we are seeing the very best of our community in the way neighbours, local groups and volunteers are checking in on one another, sharing resources and offering help wherever they can. This spirit of care and connection is a defining strength of Murrindindi.

Council's role during this time is to support the emergency response led by state authorities, while also preparing for recovery and longer-term rebuilding. Behind the scenes, council teams have been working continuously to support emergency services across the shire, manage access issues, assist with stock management, coordinate resources and prepare for impact assessments as soon as conditions allow.

We recognise how important access is for people who need to check on homes, farms and businesses. Council has raised the importance of reopening access in an orderly and safe way, prioritising those with a genuine need to access property ahead of non-essential travel. This approach supports both community safety and the practical realities facing residents.

We also recognise that some council services may be disrupted as staff are redeployed to emergency management roles and safety priorities. These decisions are not taken lightly. They are necessary to protect staff, support emergency operations and ensure council can continue to play its part in this response. We thank the community for its patience and understanding.

Council is working closely with neighbouring councils including Mitchell, Strathbogies, Mansfield and Benalla to coordinate relief, share information and scale support where required. We are also drawing on existing agreements with other councils to bring in additional capacity as needed.

While emergency response will continue for some time, council is already planning for recovery. Recovery will not be quick or simple. It will take time, care and sustained effort, particularly given the cumulative impact of repeated emergencies our community has experienced in recent years.

Council has formally raised the need for dedicated recovery support, including funding for community hubs that allow council to work directly with affected communities over time. These hubs have proven effective following previous disasters, enabling local support, access to expertise, councillor and staff engagement, wellbeing initiatives and

practical assistance. A multi-year approach is essential to support community resilience and recovery after repeated serious events.

We have also advocated for recovery funding to support the timely restoration of valued and visible community assets, including those not always classified as essential infrastructure. These places matter deeply to local communities and play a vital role in social connection, wellbeing and recovery.

Council is seeking support for betterment, so that rebuilding can strengthen resilience rather than simply replicate what existed before. In a changing climate, rebuilding to historic standards is not always appropriate or safe. We need the ability to build infrastructure that is stronger, more resilient and fit for the conditions we are increasingly facing.

We are also advocating for clean up support, including assistance with waste disposal, lost assets and the clean-up of homes and properties, as well as targeted support for businesses that have been lost or significantly impacted by this fire event.

As soon as it is safe, council will work with partner agencies to undertake impact assessments across homes, farms, businesses and community infrastructure, and to connect people with the support services they need. Agriculture Victoria, the Victorian Farmers Federation and other agencies will commence livestock impact assessments to support affected landholders, while council prepares for building inspections, environmental health checks and early infrastructure recovery.

Council has been in direct contact with the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services to share local information and advocate strongly on behalf of our community. We will continue to make the case for timely, appropriate and sustained state and federal support that reflects both the scale of this event and the long recovery ahead.

We understand that people are seeking clear, reliable information during an uncertain time. Council will continue to share verified updates through official channels, including [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au) and the Murrindindi Shire Council website, as information becomes available.

Murrindindi is a resilient community, shaped by lived experience and a strong sense of looking out for one another. Council is committed to walking alongside our community through the ongoing emergency response and the long recovery process ahead. We will continue to listen, advocate and work steadily to support our people, today and into the future.



## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

### Development Opportunities - Commercial Land Leasing at Lake Eildon

Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) is Australia's largest rural water corporation. We manage, store and deliver water to more than 25,000 active customers in northern Victoria.

We are inviting Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the lease or licence of 16 individual parcels of land around Lake Eildon aimed at complementary commercial developments. Focus sectors include but are not limited to; biodiversity, hospitality, renewable energy, telecommunications, tourism and workforce accommodation.

Each site offers unique features and development potential. Key sites include: Upper Eildon Pondage, Centre Avenue and Girdwood Parade, Lower Pondage, Karalika Heights, Jerusalem Creek Road, and Mount Pinniger, among others.

#### Expression of Interest Process

The EOI is the first stage of a two-stage process. EOIs must include a detailed development proposal, timeline, preferred tenure, economic and environmental benefits, and company profile.

Shortlisted respondents may be invited to participate in a subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP).

#### How to Apply

- Register and download full EOI documents via the GMW Tender Portal: [www.eprocure.com.au/gmwater/](http://www.eprocure.com.au/gmwater/)
- EOI Closing Date: 5:00pm, 30 January 2026

#### Contact

For further information, visit the eProcure website or phone 1800 013 357.

# Donations to Foundation Murrindindi encouraged

FOUNDATION Murrindindi is a well-known and well-loved organisation in Murrindindi Shire. They have started a bushfire fund, with 100 per cent of donations going to fire-impacted people in Murrindindi Shire. The details of the fund are in the image below.

CEO Robyn Hill was asked for an update. She said, "There's lots going on. I think the big issue for us is, it's still really early days and we don't know what people need. We're waiting for assessments about needs."

"We are having information coming in about different people as they present to us or other people we're connected to, and we are distributing food."

"We're also joining the dots so where we know people have specific needs that aren't food, we can find it for them or track it down."

"We certainly are doing some work. We've accepted quite a bit of food donations locally and from outside the shire, so that pile is building up. But really, our immediate work is to see where the need is."

"We've established the Murrindindi Disaster Fund. There's money coming into that, which is wonderful," she said. They are also able to provide tax receipts if required.

She added, "We're just inundated with people at the moment, people wanting to help, to volunteer, to donate, so Charlie's manning the phone so she can field some of that."

Asked whether she had particular advice for people wanting to donate, Robyn said, "Clothing should go to Menzies or the op shops. We [Foundation Murrindindi] don't want clothing. Food to us."

"We are getting food out to Yarck and Fawcett so that they can then deal with it out there."

She commented, "It's more trying to get information like, I need a generator, I need diesel fuel, and I need tools and gloves. So, okay, so how can we organise that and be a central role for that. Any of those random things, we're happy to help try and, as I said, connect the dots to match people up."

"Basically touch base if there's needs that aren't met and we can help point them in the right direction," she said.

"Just come in [to the shop at 88A Grant Street, Alexandra]. We're going to be here in this part for a week while the Dame's not open. It's been great actually being here

because people are popping in and just saying, I can do this or I need this or whatever."

Given the travel challenges at present, money from people outside the shire is the most helpful, "So we can use that for the short term, immediate stuff that needs to be done, but we're really mindful that we've got short, medium and long term things to deal with," Robyn said.

"The fund is going well. We've got donations rolling in and we've really got to keep that message going. It's really important for us to build that fund up."

To donate, visit [foundationmurrindindi.supporterhub.net.au/donations/murrindindi-disaster-fund](https://foundationmurrindindi.supporterhub.net.au/donations/murrindindi-disaster-fund)



*This photo, taken on Saturday, January 17, in Seymour, shows Incident Management Team members from across multiple agencies working side by side on the Longwood fire response. Bushfire response is never the work of one organisation alone. It relies on strong partnerships, shared expertise and seamless coordination, all focused on keeping communities safe. Pictured are representatives from CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria, SES, Parks Victoria, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, ACT Parks and Conservation Service, ACT SES, local councils (Mansfield, Strathbogie, Murrindindi, Mitchell and City of Whittlesea), Department of Health, Department of Transport, Agriculture Victoria, Goulburn Valley Water, Victoria Police, Triple Zero Victoria (TZV), Fire Rescue Victoria and AusNet. -S*

## SWIMMING IS FUN. BUT DROWNING ISN'T.

## PACK YOUR SUMMER SMARTS



- ✓ BE AWARE OF STRONG CURRENTS AND SUBMERGED OBJECTS
- ✓ KNOW THE CONDITIONS AND KNOW YOUR LIMITS
- ✓ NEVER SWIM ALONE OR IF YOU'RE UNSURE

FIND OUT HOW TO STAY SAFE  
BY THE WATER THIS SUMMER



# Kellock Lodge takes fire in their stride

KELLOCK Lodge CEO Tania Hunter and board chair Ian Gibb spoke about the actions that the Alexandra aged care facility undertook when the fire was approaching.

Tania said, "As soon as we heard there was a catastrophic day forecast, Kellock Lodge put their bushfire preparedness plan into place. We contacted our resident families, saying

that if they wanted to take their resident out, they needed to do so before the day."

Kellock Lodge has been advised for the last 15 years by the CFA District Commander that they stay in place and not evacuate residents.

Such an evacuation would be very complex and would put added trauma onto the residents, who are often very frail with high care needs.

The CFA have always told the facility that they would supply CFA vehicles and crews to them. Tania said, "On the day they did do that. We had CFA trucks looking after us for the whole day into the night. I think they left about midnight."

While the fire approach was frightening, "it was business as usual in here," Tania said. "Well, it wasn't exactly business as normal, but the atmosphere inside Kellock was really quite calm. There was no sense of panic. We had up to six firefighting units around the perimeter and surrounding roads all day, and the residents were really unruffled, you'd have to say."

While it was a challenging time for staff, "We had great leadership from Tania, our CEO, and Maria, her second in charge," Ian said. "Things went along pretty smoothly. Even though we were understaffed, we coped pretty well."

Although some of the Kellock staff were impacted by the fires, fortunately none lost their homes.

Tania added, "I would actually say that we still had a good complement of staff here [during the fire]. I'm amazed. We had staff step up who were not rostered on shift who came in to help. You couldn't really tell from the staff that anyone was stressed.

"We did send an email out offering [staff] to bring in their pets and belongings and their fire ready kit, so we had the dogs and cats in cages, even a parrot at one stage.

"The people in the independent living units came over and during the day, we were getting people in from the community that council believed were at threat, so we were able to help community members as well. We were very fortunate and we kept the CFA up to date with numbers."

The district commander had told them that even with ember attack, "our preparedness, the type of trees that we've got outside, we would bode fairly well," Tania said. "In spring, we start gutter clearing at least every fortnight. So we're very thankful to Nigel Garlick for his service," Tania said.

She added, "We're very appreciative of our service providers as well. Reddrops FoodWorks have been able to still supply us with food. We've actually had some food donations from the bakehouse in Yarck, and also some sandwiches and wraps from the CFA. They had an excess when the worst of the pressure was over and some of the tankers left the town with the staff going with them, so the sandwiches and wraps came back here and people really appreciated those too.

"It just really felt like Kellock Lodge were able to give back to our community because our community has given so much to us," Tania said. "We fared well."

## UGFM provided vital service under challenging circumstances

RADIO station UGFM was a lifeline for many people in Murrindindi Shire during the fire emergency, providing essential and timely information to people. This was particularly important when power, phone and internet connections were interrupted.

Peter Weeks from UGFM said on Thursday, "We basically held up fairly well. We had all our generators kick in but we ran out of fuel at the Yea transmitter. We couldn't get in to refuel it and then we got in to refuel it... and we just refueled it again [Thursday]... We've got the Telstra site going up here now as well. We've got the mobile phones working in Highlands as well today, so we've been dropping generators in everywhere."

The Yea transmitter is in the fire ground, so they had to get an escort in with the CFA to get in to refuel, and Telstra and the CFA had to get in to get their base station going. Peter said, "We're giving them power from our generator to get them back on the air."

"I think the biggest issues we've had is network failures with Telstra and NBN. They're one of their biggest problems. We've worked hard to keep all their systems running as well."

UGFM had a generator stolen from their Marysville location in early January, but fortunately, Marysville didn't lose power so people could continue to listen.

During the fires, "We're broadcasting 24/7 for the first couple of days," he said. "Then we've been able to throttle back a bit."

"Everything's being driven out of the Alexandra studios. We've had double two crew members on four-hour shifts rotating around," he said.

They didn't leave the studio when the fire was next to Alexandra. Peter said, "We decided to stay. We're in a brick building and it's in the middle of town. We decided it was safe enough to stay. We considered our options there were if the town was getting to a point where we had to we were going to switch to programs to evacuate. That's the station at Mansfield. We could keep on air from our main transmitter.

"That's a worst-case scenario plan. We had to transmit from our studio transmitter for about half a day until we could get into the main transmitter site to sort out what the generator shut down, but the biggest issue was the network failures with telephones and mobile phones and data, and that started to impact on us. We've got a backup satellite service and we also installed a satellite service at the SES headquarters as well, so we had communications when we had at least two failures of the mobile network.

Treasurer Jaclyn Symes, Emergency Management Commissioner Tim Weibusch, the Chief Officer of the SES Alistair Drayton and the Acting CEO of SES Deborah Mann were at the CFA/SES headquarters in the day following the fire. The Premier ended up not attending as there were protestors out the front which the police were unhappy with. The communications also went down again.

Peter said, "Unfortunately, the firefighters in the meeting and the CFA members that were there didn't get to meet the Premier... Yesterday wasn't the time to vent that anger."

He added, "Full-time firefighters and volunteer firefighters did an amazing job to protect the town. That really saved Alexandra from having a major fire coming in."



**KELLOCK LODGE:** Lisa (Administration), Maria (Manager Corporate Services), Tania (CEO), Leanne (Personal Care) and Bruce (Maintenance) were all caring for residents during the Longwood fire. Kellock Lodge would like to sincerely thank all staff who worked on the day. -S



**Emergency Management Commissioner Tim Weibusch, Vic SES Chief Officer Alistair Drayton, and Acting Vic SES CEO Deborah Mann visited Alexandra CFA and SES stations on Wednesday, January 14.** -S



**SES members with Victorian Treasurer Jaclyn Symes.** -S



# Heading to the Australian Open this January?

Victoria's Big Build works continue across the state with train disruptions on the Ballarat, Ararat, Maryborough, Geelong and Warrnambool lines and road disruptions on the Eastern and Princes freeways. These works could impact your journey into Melbourne to attend the Australian Open.



Avoid delays and check before you travel at [bigbuild.vic.gov.au](http://bigbuild.vic.gov.au)



# A summary of the supports available

## Emergency Recovery Hotline

VICTORIANS can call the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 for information about payments and recovery programs. Additional assistance, including emergency relief payments and Guaranteed Service Level electricity bill credits, remains available for eligible households.

## Community recovery officers and hubs

The state and federal government have committed \$15 million to establish Community Recovery Officers and Recovery Hubs across bushfire affected areas. Recovery Hubs will be a one-stop shop for residents to access services and information from government and community organisations. Community Recovery Officers will work within councils to identify community needs, develop tailored programs, and provide on-the-ground support to help locals rebuild.

## Primary producer recovery grants

An initial \$40 million in grants of up to \$75,000 will be provided to eligible primary producers, to help cover the costs of clean-up and reinstating their enterprises. Funding can be used for essential recovery activities such as disposing of livestock, rebuilding or replacing damaged on-farm infrastructure and restoring operations. Grants will open as soon as possible and will be delivered by Rural Finance. Information on eligibility and how to apply will be available at [ruralfinance.com.au](http://ruralfinance.com.au)

## Concessional loans for primary producers

The state and federal governments will also provide a further \$10 million in concessional loans to help primary producers recover from the bushfires. Loans of up to \$250,000 will be available for producers who have suffered significant damage to assets, while loans of up to \$100,000 will support those experiencing

a major loss of income. This assistance will further help cover essential costs such as repairing or replacing damaged equipment, rebuilding infrastructure, purchasing livestock and meeting working capital expenses like wages, rent and fodder. Applications will open as soon as possible and will be delivered by Rural Finance. Information on eligibility and how to apply will be available at [ruralfinance.com.au](http://ruralfinance.com.au)

## Support for councils to restore community assets

Almost \$12 million will be delivered through the Council Support Fund to help bushfire-affected councils restore vital community assets and services. The fund boosts councils' capacity to lead recovery efforts and make decisions that reflect local needs, ensuring support goes where it's needed most. The fund will be active for two years, giving councils the time they need for clean-up and reconstruction. Councils will receive up to \$750,000 depending on the scale of impacts, providing tailored support for rebuilding communities.

## Disaster Recovery Allowance

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA) will be available for Victorians impacted by the ongoing bushfires. The allowance provides financial assistance to people residing or working in designated areas who have experienced partial or total income loss due to the bushfires. Employees and sole traders may receive up to 13 weeks of income support. To be eligible, your income must have fallen below the average Australian weekly income because of the bushfires. Visit [servicesaustralia.gov.au/disastersupport](http://servicesaustralia.gov.au/disastersupport)

## Prolonged power outage payments

The state and federal government are providing to \$16 million in financial assistance for households impacted by extended power outages following the bushfires. Eligible households who have been without power for seven or more days within a two-week period will receive \$2380 per week for up to three weeks. Applications can be made through electricity distribution businesses, with full details available at [energy.vic.gov.au/about-energy/safety/power-outages](http://energy.vic.gov.au/about-energy/safety/power-outages)

## Financial counselling

More than \$4 million is being funded to provide financial counselling for communities impacted by the bushfires, helping Victorians access emergency assistance, navigate recovery systems and stabilise their finances so they can rebuild. The funding will boost the Victorian Farmers Federation's Financial Capability Support Program, giving primary producers tailored financial advice.

## Emergency relief payments

Emergency relief payments remain available for eligible Victorians who have had their

homes destroyed by the fires, or who were required to evacuate due to emergency warnings. To find out more, please visit an Emergency Relief Centre or call VicEmergency on 1800 226 226.

## Residential waste

The Bushfire Cleanup Program invests an initial \$10 million to support uninsured and underinsured Victorians to remove damaged structures and hazardous materials, easing the burden on families already facing enormous stress. This support is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments under the Commonwealth State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

The Victorian Government will also invest \$5 million towards waiving waste levies in eligible local government areas and fully cover landfill operator gate fees, ensuring all bushfire waste can be disposed of free of charge.

## Uninsured households

The state and federal governments are making assistance payments of up to \$52,250 available to eligible uninsured households so they can re-establish their principal place of residence. Call the Emergency Recovery Hotline (above).

## Community support grants

Grants of up to \$5000 for events and activities that support mental health and wellbeing so they can navigate their recovery as a community.

## Animal welfare

Landholders concerned about livestock welfare can now put in a request directly via Agriculture Victoria (on 1800 226 226) who will work with the Fire Incident Controller to assess the request and determine the earliest and safest way to get access.

## Fodder distribution

A \$10 million emergency support program has been announced to help distribute fodder to those farmers who need it.

## Emergency accommodation

The Australian and Victorian Governments will provide \$1.5 million to coordinate emergency accommodation options for people who have nowhere else to go and have had to seek shelter in hotels, serviced apartments and other temporary places.

## Mental health support

\$1 million will fund experts in disaster recovery mental health support to provide group counselling sessions so communities can better support one another and navigate their recovery together.

## Recovery Support Program

There will be one single point of help so people who've lost so much don't have to

deal with government red tape. \$5 million in funding will ensure case support workers will be available for affected Victorians to help them navigate matters like housing and legal.

## Funding for councils

Councils will receive between \$450,000 and \$1.3 million to employ recovery staff and deliver local programs.

## Funding for community groups

Community organisations can apply for grants of up to \$75,000 for locally led initiatives.

## Bushfire Appeal

The 2026 Victorian Bushfire Appeal is now open for donations to support fire affected communities, Victorians can contribute via [vic.gov.au/2026-Victorian-Bushfire-Appeal](http://vic.gov.au/2026-Victorian-Bushfire-Appeal)

100 per cent of donations will go to fire affected communities, and the government is covering all the administrative costs.

## GMW fill points

GOULBURN Valley Water (GVW) is at the Incident Control Centre (ICC) at Seymour, working with local government areas affected by fires and emergency services to ensure our people remain safe while accessing assets in the emergency area.

They have staff on the ground at different locations across the service area to keep services running and people informed about interruptions where they are occurring.

Roads are starting to open but falling trees are posing a significant risk to accessing assets and respond to service issues. They continue to work with emergency services to access these locations safely.

Four water fill sites are being set up for people who have been affected by the fire and need access to water. The Murrindindi Shire ones are at Rotary Park opposite 49 Vickery Street in Alexandra, and at the Yea Recreation Reserve, 18 Snodgrass St, Yea.

This is an emergency service for those affected by fires. Water carters cannot access this water supply. They need to use local standpipes. Water at the standpipes in Alexandra and Yea is free to access at this point in time.

They also have a water tanker located at the Ruffy CFA Station with a drinking water supply available to the Ruffy community.

They want to thank water carting contractors for their ongoing commitment to delivering water to these towns and others.

Molesworth water treatment and wastewater treatment facilities are the remaining sites operating off generators. GMW deeply appreciates the efforts of emergency services in ensuring the GMW teams remain safe while performing this critical work. They have had terrific support from the Victorian Government and local councils in sharing information about water supply impacts and helping us communicate with communities.

## Buxton, Thornton, Rubicon

Water supply has returned to normal. If customers have issues with water discoloration, please run an outside tap for a short period can help. The water is safe to drink.

## Eildon, Molesworth, Seymour, Avenel, Mansfield, Bonnie Doon

Water supply has returned to normal.

## Yea, Alexandra, Euroa, Bonnie Doon

Water supply is unaffected. GMW has water fill sites available in these four towns for fire impacted residents. You do not have to be a Goulburn Valley Water customer to access this water. These fill sites are not available to commercial water carters. They can access standpipes in each of these towns free of charge.

Due to the fast-moving nature of information at this time, please confirm the details on the GMW website.

## Generator safety reminder

AS communities begin returning home after recent emergencies and power disruptions caused by fires, the need for portable generators has prompted a warning from Energy Safe Victoria about the serious risks associated with using them incorrectly.

Portable generators can provide temporary power during outages, but if used improperly they can expose households, neighbours, and emergency workers to serious and sometimes life-threatening risks, including carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire.

"We know people are dealing with challenging conditions and making decisions under pressure after fires and with power outages," Energy Safe CEO Leanne Hughson said.

Energy Safe is urging people with generators to pause and make sure they understand how to use them properly following concerns some households might connect them directly to household wall sockets or switchboards, a practice that significantly increases safety risks.

"Generators are a useful backup during outages, but they are not designed to power entire homes. Shortcuts or improvised connections can put lives at risk," Ms Hughson said.

Key safety reminders for generator use include: Only connect household equipment to the generator via an extension lead, then a double adaptor or power board; Never operate generators indoors or in enclosed or poorly ventilated areas; Do not connect generators directly to household wiring unless a licensed electrician has installed a dedicated connection; Never modify household wiring yourself to fit a generator; Engage a licensed electrician; and follow manufacturer instructions and only use as designed.

Detailed guidance on using generators safely is available on the [energysafe.vic.gov.au](http://energysafe.vic.gov.au)

## WFI Insurance donates \$50,000 to the VFF Disaster Relief Fund

WFI Insurance has donated \$50,000 to the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Disaster Relief Fund, to support critical bushfire relief efforts.

The VFF Disaster Relief Fund has been activated to provide immediate, farmer-led support to farmers impacted by the devastating bushfires in Victoria.

WFI Insurance Executive General Manager Damien Gallagher said Australian farming communities have suffered a brutal start to the year and WFI is committed to supporting their recovery.

"The terrible bushfires in Victoria have hit farming communities hard and our hearts go out to them. With our donation of \$50,000 to the VFF Disaster Relief Fund, we continue to support on-the-ground organisations that can deliver help quickly and effectively," Mr Gallagher said.

The donation comes a week after WFI announced its partnership with Rural Aid to support agricultural communities impacted by natural disasters.

Rural Aid is Australia's leading charity supporting farmers, their families and rural communities. It works to provide practical support for farmers in the face of adversity, providing hay, water, water tanks, financial assistance and mental health and wellbeing support.

"WFI Insurance is proud to partner and support organisations that share the same values and are aligned with our purpose, to make your world a safer place," Mr Gallagher said.

"Our on-the-ground disaster response partners play a critical role in helping rural communities recover from disasters. Their local knowledge, resources and volunteer networks are fundamental in helping our farmers get back on their feet," Mr Gallagher said.

For farmers needing to access the VFF Disaster Relief Fund, please visit [vff.org.au/vffdisasterrelieffund](http://vff.org.au/vffdisasterrelieffund)

For farmers seeking Rural Aid support, please visit [faa.ruralaid.org.au](http://faa.ruralaid.org.au)

# Their best start, starts with Free Kinder



Free Kinder is available for three- and four-year-old children at standalone sessional kindergartens and long day care centres across Victoria – saving families an average of \$2,400 per child, per year.

From 2026, some children will be eligible for more time at Four-Year-Old Kindergarten each week.

Visit [vic.gov.au/pre-prep](https://vic.gov.au/pre-prep)

Kindergarten is a safe environment for children to build skills, become more independent and make friends.

At kindergarten, children will learn:

- language, literacy and numeracy skills through play, art, music and dance
- skills and confidence before primary school.

Contact your preferred kinder service or local council to learn about how to enrol for 2026.

Visit [vic.gov.au/kinder](https://vic.gov.au/kinder)

# Statement from Murrindindi Shire Council

MURRINDINDI Shire Council stands with all community members affected by the January 2026 bushfire across our shire and surrounding regions. This has been one of the most complex and confronting fire events our community has faced in many years, with residents, farmers, businesses and visitors experiencing significant loss, uncertainty and disruption.

Council is deeply saddened by the death of Murrindindi resident Maxwell Hobson during the fire events over the past week. We extend our sincere condolences to Mr Hobson's

## Victorian Bushfire Appeal

ACKNOWLEDGING the significant devastation from the ongoing bushfire emergency across many parts of Victoria, the Victorian Emergency Relief and Recovery Foundation (VERRF) has launched the January 2026 Victorian Bushfire Appeal to raise funds to support communities across Victoria.

Donations to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal can be made by credit card through Westpac's secure online payment system, PayWay. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

If you would like to donate over the phone, please call 1800 837 733 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

Your generosity will go towards the rebuilding of lives, livelihoods and the communities of those affected by the January 2026 Victorian Bushfires.

Victorian Bushfire Appeal funds may go towards immediate assistance, relief and delivery of services to support individuals and their communities through this traumatic event, community identified projects and programs that support and instil a strong sense of community spirit, and community recovery critical programs identified by the community which regenerate the region's natural environment and wildlife.

Support through immediate relief to individuals will be provided in collaboration with a number of locally identified charities. These charities are embedded in the local community, providing immediate practical relief and recovery, and ensuring the most vulnerable within our community are supported. Further information on how individuals can apply directly to VERRF for additional assistance will be provided in the coming days.

Community recovery initiatives, including those focused on community spaces in the natural and built environment will be funded through a merit-based application process. The application process will be determined in the coming weeks, allowing impacted communities time to consider their immediate local priorities. VERRF will continue to provide updates on this website on projects funded.

For more information about recovery work happening in Victoria, please go to the Emergency Recovery Victoria website.

Only financial donations are accepted.

If you would like to donate goods or volunteer your time or money you are encouraged to reach out to other charities, for example GIVIT.

100 per cent of the money you donate to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal 2026 goes towards supporting the relief and recovery of people and communities affected by an event. Your donation will not be used to cover any administrative costs.

The VERRF Board generously volunteers their time and are not paid for their work.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety provides administrative support to VERRF and our board.

Visit [vic.gov.au/2026-Victorian-Bushfire-Appeal](http://vic.gov.au/2026-Victorian-Bushfire-Appeal)

family. Mr Hobson was a respected member of the rural farming community, and his loss is felt profoundly in Terip Terip, which has already endured widespread damage. Our thoughts remain with the community as they continue to support one another during this difficult period.

### Emergency response and community support

Throughout this emergency, council teams have been working alongside state-led emergency services, providing local knowledge, coordination support and on-the-ground assistance. With active fires still in the landscape and conditions expected to remain volatile, council continues to prepare for periods of high fire danger over coming weeks.

Across the shire, communities have shown extraordinary care and cooperation, coordinating relief efforts, sharing information and supporting one another emotionally and with essential supplies. Council is working closely with these community-led initiatives and providing supplies, information and any other practical assistance as needed.

### Recovery planning

While response efforts continue, council has begun planning for the long recovery ahead. We recognise this journey will take time, care and sustained effort, particularly given the cumulative toll of repeated emergencies in recent years.

In the coming days and weeks, council will be undertaking environmental health checks, building and infrastructure assessments, tree safety assessments, and supporting the state-sponsored waste and clean-up coordination in collaboration with partner agencies and neighbouring councils.

### Information and support available now

Bushfire Information Hubs have been established at the Yea Library and Customer Service Centre and the Alexandra Library.

These hubs offer face to face support, assistance with accessing disaster relief payments and state and Commonwealth services, referrals for clean-up and wellbeing supports, and clear and up-to-date information.

Council is also sharing information on available services including Services Australia disaster relief payments, Commonwealth Bank pop-up and mobile banking in Yea and Alexandra, and the State coordinated clean-up program for uninsured or underinsured properties.

### Advocacy for community needs

Council continues to advocate strongly to state and federal governments to ensure the needs and experiences of Murrindindi communities are recognised in relief and recovery decisions.

Advocacy to date has resulted in additional fire-impacted towns being included in disaster relief eligibility after council raised concerns about initial exclusions. Council has also

sought clearer and more flexible assessment processes to ensure residents feel encouraged to lodge claims and access what they are entitled to.

Further advocacy has focused on coordinated clean-up support for uninsured and underinsured properties, improved access to financial and banking services in impacted towns, and long-term recovery funding that reflects the scale of this event and the cumulative impact of recent emergencies.

This work will continue as council pushes for community-based recovery hubs, support for primary producers and small businesses, restoration of important community assets, and funding for rebuilding that improves resilience.

### Service information and contact points

Some council services continue to be impacted as a result of the fire event. The latest information on service impacts is available on council's website at [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/Community/Safety-and-Emergencies/Longwood-Fire-Event-January-2026/Impacts-to-Council-Services](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/Community/Safety-and-Emergencies/Longwood-Fire-Event-January-2026/Impacts-to-Council-Services)

Residents are encouraged to stay connected through council's website, Facebook page, or by contacting or visiting council directly. Staff are available to provide information, reassurance and support.

For the latest information and available support, visit [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire) or contact council on 5772 0333.

## Fawcett Hall becomes a vital connection point after being saved

SAM Hicks from Fawcett Hall has been posting very effectively about the situation in the Fawcett and Koriella area both during and after the fires. She was interviewed last week about the situation in their area, and about the saving of Fawcett Hall, built in 1882.

She said, "Our little valley was impacted on that horrible little day. Was it almost a week now? I can't believe it. It was specifically agreed with the committee that in the case of a fire, and this had been standing since the 2009 bushfires, that the Fawcett Hall shouldn't be protected, that any firefighters in the region should focus on residences in the street or the road rather than the hall, because we can always rebuild the hall. We can bring the community together to rebuild it as the hub.

"Thankfully, a very small team of locals and the Koriella Fire Brigade, they saved our little hall, and to just say that I am thankful is a massive understatement. I'm so freaking grateful. They put their lives on the line when a fire front was coming from nearly three sides at the back of the hall, and they saved the hall. They saved probably a good 40 to 50 per cent of the reserve, so we will be in ever their debt because now what it's allowed us to do is to mobilise the hall.

"The hall is now a mini relief centre. We have community dinners every night at 6pm and we've been able to open up fundraising," she said. "The 'Fawcett Angels' have been seeking out the never-ending list of items that our amazing residents need."

She commented, "I'm really pleased, the community has come together for us. We put a call out on Facebook for funds and within a really short amount of time we had a lot of money that we can now liquidate into cash to turn into vouchers for fuel, water, hardware and food.

"If a resident comes and they need, for example, fuel for their generator and they don't have cash because the banks are not open because of roadblocks or if they just can't get there, they can go in and get their jerry cans fueled.

"It's a great community effort and Murrindindi Foundation has been astronomical in their support. Sasha and Robyn have just kicked into overdrive and I hear that Rotary are gearing up now and Murrindindi Shire Council has been in touch non-stop with us which I really appreciate,



Fawcett Hall. -S

and Victoria Police. My god, Victorian Police need a freaking medal. They have just supported us all the way through and we've got such a really good police presence now because you know we're going to get the idiots. They've just been amazing to us, and the young teams that came in from Forest Fire Management Victoria. They cleared our road in about 24 hours and I don't even know how they did it. They took all the dangerous limbs down, all the dangerous trees out there cleaned up the road. I'm just in awe of the effort.

"Everybody's been so kind and it really restores your faith in humans," she said.

Sam worked incredibly hard with the Kinglake and Marysville communities after 2009 bushfire, and she was quick to note that the majority of the donations and the support has come in from those two regions. "I'll be forever grateful for that," she said, adding that they've had donations into the hall's accounts from all over the world.

There are a range of people in the area, from bigger farmers to hobby farms, part-timers and full-timers, as well as multi-generational farmers.

She said, "The community sentiment is quite strong. We're all a bit wobbly from one time to the other, but there's a lot happening. Bushfire can be a little triggering, especially to our people that have gone through the 2009 bushfires. But I think overall, we're remarkable because we've all come together as a community. There's been a lot of compassion between people."

She even said that some people who lost their homes have remarkably come in with a plate of food for the community dinners.

Nine homes were lost in the immediate area, some new and some historical. Farms were also very significantly impacted.

She also spoke with compassion about the men of the area who have lost their tools, shedding and tractors. "I think that's pretty hard for our menfolk but our farmers out here are a resilient tough bunch," she said.

Marysville people have been very helpful in helping Sam to navigate the messaging and getting her wording right. I don't want to offend anybody because everybody wants to help and people feel helpless. "They want to help either with cash or food or donation because they just see everything on the media and think, you know what, we need to help," she said.

"I'm very proud of my community. I'm very proud of our region. I am incredibly grateful for all the emergency services, all the agencies, everybody. Everybody's reached out. They've just been kind. It shows really how our communities can get up off their knees and just make things happen in a disaster. I'm thankful for a lot of things and I'm thankful that we lost no lives in our road because that would have just torn our little community apart," she said.

While many people evacuated the area prior to the fire, some then suffered the trauma of watching their house burn down via their CCTV cameras.

She added that if people would like to donate to the Fawcett fundraising effort, everything will go directly to the residents and there will be no administration fees, supported by Foundation Murrindindi via their DGR.

You can nominate Fawcett Hall when you donate here: [foundationmurrindindi.supporterhub.net.au/donations/murrindindi-disaster-fund](http://foundationmurrindindi.supporterhub.net.au/donations/murrindindi-disaster-fund)



# Drink driving these holidays? Wrong choice.

The police will be using every tool they have to keep the roads safe. But if you decide to drink then drive, how your holiday ends is your choice.





Bruce Stuart from Alexandra, helping out at the hay depot at the rodeo grounds, with hay donors Lawrence Meagher and Gus Meagher from St Arnau's, helped by Brayden Mills from Natteyallock. Lawrence has made many hay deliveries in the area through the years, and was very pleased to be able to help out with a large donation of hay. -AR

# Hay donations welcomed

ANDREW Embling from Embling Rural, organiser of the postponed Alexandra Pro Rodeo, was very quick to organise hay for fire-impacted farmers, using the rodeo ground and infrastructure of the rodeo as a base.

Trucks and utes came from far and wide to support the much-needed effort.

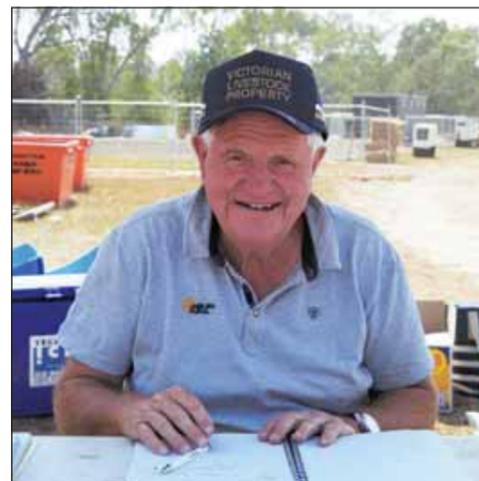
Among them, 30 truckloads of hay from all over the state arrived in Alexandra on Sunday, organised by local Jye Savage. The hay and transport was all donated. The convoy was

escorted into Alexandra from Yea by Jan and Neil Beer in the CFA Limestone 4WD.

Twenty B Doubles are expected to arrive (or have arrived) with hay from Need for Feed this week.



Lauren, Olivia, Zoe and Bryce Palmer, with Darren from Peninsula Quarries (second from right) at the hay depot in the Alexandra Rodeo grounds. Bryce explained that his family have a holiday house in the Alexandra area. They evacuated the town at 5am on Friday and once they returned to their home on the Mornington Peninsula, Lauren ran a donations drive, collecting hay and horse feed. These were dropped off to the Alexandra Rodeo grounds today. It will provide welcome support to impacted farmers. -AR



Hay drop organiser Andrew Embling. Andrew was expecting to hold the Alexandra Pro Rodeo on Saturday, January 10, but it had to be cancelled due to the fires. The infrastructure was able to be used for fire support purposes instead. -AR

## Park closures

AS bushfires continue to burn across parts of Victoria, many parks are closed due to ongoing fire activity and may remain closed for some time. It is not safe to enter or camp in these parks and forests.

Closures may change as fire activity and conditions evolve. Parks Victoria may need to extend or introduce new closures at short notice to keep people safe.

Lake Eildon National Park and Cathedral Range State Park are fully closed at present.

## Victoria bushfires upgraded to insurance catastrophe

THE Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has on Saturday, January 17 escalated its significant event declaration to an Insurance Catastrophe for the bushfires that have been impacting 18 LGAs across Victoria since January 7.

Since the ICA's initial significant event declaration, insurers have been able to further assess the large recovery effort that will be required as a result of these severe bushfires, with 2369 claims being lodged to date across property, commercial and motor.

Current indications suggest around 30 per cent of all property claims are total losses. The extent of commercial losses will also be significant as a result of this event and ICA anticipate increased claims numbers as people start to return to their homes and businesses.

The ICA's Catastrophe declaration serves to escalate and prioritise the insurance industry's response for affected policyholders. Under the Catastrophe declaration, the industry will continue to ensure: Claims from affected policyholders are given priority by insurers; claims are being triaged to direct urgent assistance to the worst-affected property owners; ICA representatives have been mobilised to work with local agencies and services and affected policyholders as soon as emergency services say it is safe to do so.

Insurers will mobilise disaster response specialists to assist affected customers with claims and assessments as soon as emergency services say it is safe to do so. An industry taskforce has been established to identify and address issues arising from this catastrophe.

The ICA is closely monitoring access into Longwood and remains on standby to support surrounding communities including Harcourt.

ICA Deputy CEO Kylie Macfarlane said, "These bushfires have been devastating for many communities across Victoria, and insurer's priority is getting help to people as quickly as possible.

"We acknowledge that a large recovery effort will be required to help the state recover from this catastrophic event and insurers stand ready to support communities in this process.

"I'd encourage Victorians impacted by these fires, to get in touch with their insurer and lodge a claim. They can do so even if they do not know the full extent of damage and may have not returned to their home or business as yet."

Information about what impacted policyholders should do and how to go about the claims process can be found on the ICA website.

## Fund set up to help with rural needs

EMBLING Rural are keen to help farmers and landholders impacted by the fire and have a fund set up to support them. People are welcome to donate funds, and this will be used to provide goods to people who come in needing items to help get them back on their feet.

To donate to the fund, drop into their store at 54 Grant Street, Alexandra, or give them a call on 5772 3110.

## Recovery Hub locations

We acknowledge there a lot of towns that are doing an amazing job coordinating their own recovery efforts.

Recovery Hubs serve as a one-stop-shop for disaster-affected communities to access services and information and are there to supplement the great recovery effort already happening in affected towns.

In Murrindindi Shire, the hubs are located at Yea Library, 15 The Semicircle, open daily; and Alexandra Library, 49 Grant Street, open daily.



A screenshot of the app which should be avoided. -S

## Please check your emergency app

EILDON Fire Brigade has noticed some confusion and comments in the community regarding emergency apps. There is only one official app for emergency warnings in Victoria, VicEmergency.

They have seen reports of people downloading and using an unofficial app

called 'Vic Emergencies' (plural). This is not the official app.

Reports indicate it is not working correctly. It may not provide you with critical, life-saving warnings.

If you have the wrong app, delete it and download the official one. Do not rely on third-party look-alikes for your safety.

# Recovery will take time

by Dr Helen Haines, Member for Indi

VISITING the fire ravaged communities surrounding Alexandra, including Yark and Fawcett, it was impossible to ignore the scale of what happened during the catastrophic fires over the seventh and eighth of January. A life lost. Homes ruined. Paddocks blackened. Fences destroyed. Livestock lost. Entire livelihoods upended.

These losses are deeply personal. They belong to families who now must rebuild and to communities that are grappling with the enormity of what they have been through and what is ahead.

Recovery will take time, money and our three levels of government working together with communities to heal and rebuild.

Federal recovery assistance has begun.

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment has been stood up. This one-off payment, \$1000 per eligible adult and \$400 per child, is designed to provide immediate help to those who have suffered

the most serious impacts, such as the loss of homes, serious injury, or the death of a loved one.

So far, residents in Alexandra, Caveat, Creightons Creek, Ghin Ghin, Gobur, Highlands, Kanumbra, Terip Terip, Whiteheads Creek and Yarck are eligible for the payment. Some of these towns were not included in the initial announcement. Local residents and the council raised this issue with me and I immediately took the issue to the Minister for action. There are still areas missing and these communities will be added as assessments continue across fire-affected areas. I'll keep pushing to ensure no town is overlooked.

But recovery is not just about payments.

It's about restoring roads so people can safely reach their properties and check stock. It's about restoring power supply and telecommunications. It's about navigating complex insurance and it's about mental health support that lasts beyond the first few weeks. It's about helping farmers rebuild

livelihoods, and councils repairing assets and infrastructure.

Our communities have already shown extraordinary effort and spirit.

CFA volunteers saved lives, properties and livelihoods in conditions that were dangerous, exhausting and relentless. Some of them lost their own homes while protecting others. Alongside them were forest management crews, SES, emergency services, local councils, volunteers at relief centres, and neighbours helping neighbours. In the darkest moments, people stepped up.

This fire season stretches ahead of us, demanding endurance, resolve and sustained support.

Recovery must be properly funded, informed by local needs and delivered over the long term. I am already working closely with Murrindindi Shire, and the federal and state government. I have visited many affected communities and will continue to do so as we navigate this long path back.

## Alexandra Rotary Club needs your support

ROTARY needs your financial support to help our community. Bank Account details are: Rotary Club of Alexandra, National Australia Bank-Alexandra BSB 083 503 60663 0744.

They are currently in the process of producing vouchers for those affected by the fire \$100 each that can be used in Alexandra.

These are accepted by the local foodworks, petrol station, clothing shops, mechanics, pharmacy, hairdresser to name a few.

In 2009, \$65,000 was distributed in vouchers. These not only help those affected but help local businesses survive. Those receiving the vouchers can decide what they need. They start with \$100 and then they can request more as needed.

With the Alexandra Lions Club, they are holding a casual social night for the local CFA members and their families at On Point Brewery on Friday, January 30.

They don't need clothes etc at the moment, storage is a problem and those affected don't have anywhere to keep the items.

They are welcoming shovels, rakes, picks, etc, in perfect or good usable condition, cash donations, fuel cards, FoodWorks cards, work gloves, jerry cans and belts.

## Livestock burials

AS bushfires and the provision of safe road access into properties continues to affect regional communities and farmers across Victoria, many landholders are faced with the challenge of managing dead livestock.

Landowners are now advised that the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) does not have specific timelines on the burial of dead livestock due to bushfires.

EPA's advice is that farmers and landowners need to follow the direction of emergency services and not enter their properties until safe to do so. It is acknowledged that access to some areas may be limited for some time, which will delay the appropriate disposal of livestock.

EPA is available to support and advise landowners with the clean up of their property. Please contact the EPA hotline on 1300 372 842.



## Communications restoration in Alexandra area

LOCAL CFA, SES, DEECA and UGFM Radio technicians and electricians worked tirelessly, spending the three days up to last Monday restoring temporary power to local Telephone Exchanges, Mobile Phone base stations, Emergency Radio Communications sites and local TV and FM radio transmitters in Alexandra, Thornton, Eildon and Yarck areas.

Generators were installed returning vital communications and internet services for residents in the fire affected areas of Murrindindi shire, following the loss of power from the Longwood fire.

Thankfully the generators that were originally to be used at Alexandra Pro Rodeo last Saturday were available and redeployed to restore and maintain services.

Roads needed to be cleared of fire affected trees to enabled the team to access communication sites and restore services following the fire.

CFA members from Alexandra are also assisting by regularly topping up fuel for the generators until normal power is restored, that may take weeks. Without the generators the situation would have been disastrous with an extended period of a total loss of communications, as external crews would have had difficulty in gaining access to make temporary repairs.

A big thank you to Alexandra CFA and SES, DEECA, UGFM, Alexandra Events, E-Tech, Grimshaw Electrics, Weeks Radio, Keaths Excavations, Tyre Power and Simpson's for the team effort in helping to keep us safe and connected following the fires spread over such a large area.

## Beware of scams and fraud in emergency situations

PEOPLE are advised to remaining vigilant and be extra cautious regarding unexpected calls or messages claiming to be from well-known organisations including banks, telecommunications companies and government agencies. You should never respond to links in text messages directing you to sites that ask for passwords, and

you should never click on any of these you receive.

If customers receive an unexpected call, ask for their organisation name and their name, then hang up. Look up the number of the organisation and call them back. If the call is legitimate, you'll be able to resume the conversation.

## VFBV supporting CFA volunteers in need

VOLUNTEER Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) delegates and officials are working with affected volunteer fire brigades to access support available through the VFBV Volunteer Support and Recovery Trust Fund and VFBV Welfare Fund.

With the large number of members directly impacted, they are expecting high demand.

VFBV supports CFA volunteers who have been impacted by large bushfires and helps those that have lost their homes, fencing, machinery, stock, equipment and/or livelihoods.

They have two different donation mechanisms for people to choose from when donating. At this time, their preference is that donations are made to the VFBV Volunteer Support and Recovery Trust.

Members of the public are invited to donate to the VFBV Volunteer Support and Recovery Trust Fund, which can be found at [givenow.com.au/volunteersupport](http://givenow.com.au/volunteersupport)

This fund is currently assisting CFA volunteers impacted by the 2025/26 Bushfire Season.

The VFBV Volunteer Support and Recovery Trust Fund (formerly Black Saturday Recovery Trust Fund) was established in 2009 following the Black Saturday fires to provide assistance to CFA volunteers who had suffered loss as a result of the Victorian Black Saturday Fires.

This fund is established to respond to significant natural disasters such as floods, storms and bushfires impacting on CFA volunteers, and is receiving donations to support CFA volunteers who have been directly impacted by the 2025/26 Bushfires.

It provides swift one-off grants to help CFA volunteers recover from loss of life, loss of home, and loss of outbuildings, fencing, stock, livelihood and any other impacts.

Following its creation on Black Saturday, it has awarded over \$1.2 million in grants to CFA volunteers and their families.

VFBV covers all administration fees, and 100 per cent of funds received are used for the payment of volunteer grants.

## Free legal help for fire-impacted people

FREE legal and renter support is available for people impacted by the fires. Recovering after a disaster can be overwhelming, especially when you're dealing with insurers, landlords, banks or government payments. Knowing your rights can make a real difference.

ARC Justice provides free legal and renter support to communities across central and northern Victoria, including people impacted by recent fires.

Their experienced teams can support you at any stage of recovery, with clear, practical advice to help reduce stress and support informed decision-making.

They can help with things like:

Emergency relief payments including what to do if a government or insurance payment has been denied.

Renters' rights, including your options if your rental home has been damaged or destroyed.

Insurance claims, including what to expect, and what to know before accepting settlements or temporary accommodation payments.

Court access and orders, including if the disaster is affecting your ability to attend court or comply with orders.

If there's a legal issue involved, they'll help you find the right information or connect you with the right service.

Contact ARC Justice on 5445 0909 or 1800 450 909 or email [intake@arcjustice.org.au](mailto:intake@arcjustice.org.au)

Recovery can be a long and complex journey, support is available, and you don't have to navigate it alone.

# Longwood Fire Event



## Information and Financial Support

### Financial support for eligible residents

It can be difficult to navigate the options when it comes to available financial support, contact the VicEmergency hotline on 1800 226 226, or call Council on 5772 0333 for help.

### Emergency Relief Payments

You may be eligible for an Emergency Relief Payment if you have unmet immediate relief needs and:

- your principal place of residence is damaged or destroyed by the January 2026 bushfires, and you can't live in it, or
- your principal place of residence was in an evacuation warning area, and you evacuated your property.

To apply for a payment, contact The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing:

- Call the VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226 (Press 0, then 1 to talk to someone, or press 9 for an interpreter)
- Visit an Emergency Relief Centre

Have personal identification (ID) with you if possible, such as:

- driver licence
- Medicare card
- letter or bill with your name and home address.

The VicEmergency Hotline is experiencing a very high number of calls about the current fires and relief payments. There may be a delay in answering your call. If you can't speak to a support officer immediately you will receive a call back, which may be from an unknown number.

### Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP) is a one off, non-means tested lump sum payment.

It offers a payment of \$1,000 for eligible adults and \$400 for eligible children who've been adversely affected by a major disaster. It can help you if the disaster caused major damage to your home or major assets that you own at your home. It can also help if you were seriously injured or your immediate family member has died or is missing.

To get AGDRP you must meet all eligibility rules, including being directly affected in a declared area. These areas are still being assessed and we anticipate more areas in Murrindindi Shire will be added to the list soon.

To learn more and apply, visit the Services Australia website at [servicesaustralia.gov.au/vic-bushfires-jan-2026-agdrp](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/vic-bushfires-jan-2026-agdrp)

For these and other financial assistance, please visit our website at [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire](https://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire)

### Important Contacts

Always call Triple Zero (000) in life threatening emergencies.

VicEmergency Hotline: for warnings, information and Emergency Relief Payments - call 1800 226 226 or visit [emergency.vic.gov.au/relief](https://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief)

Agriculture Victoria: for animal, stock and crop issues - call 136 186 or email [recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

Lifeline: for mental health support - call 13 11 14 or visit [lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

1800RESPECT: for family violence matters, call 1800 737 732 or visit [1800respect.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au)

VicTraffic: for road closures and hazards - call 13 37 78 or visit [traffic.transport.vic.gov.au](https://traffic.transport.vic.gov.au)

For more information call Council on 5772 0333 or visit our website at [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire](https://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire)

### Kerbside collection update

Some kerbside collection services were postponed due to fire impacts. Many roads across the Shire are closed and unsafe for our contractors to access.

We appreciate your patience. Please leave your bins out for collection and our contractors will empty them when road access is restored.

Spoiled food can go in your green-lidded FOGO bin (please remove any packaging).

Council is also offering free disposal of spoiled food at our Resource Recovery Centres during this emergency event.

### Frequently Asked Questions

To support the community, we have answered some common question on our website. It will be regularly updated.

It includes information on Council services, financial support, returning home, agriculture and recovery, rebuilding and clean up. Learn more on our website at [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire](https://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire)

Get in touch  
5772 0333

[murrindindi.vic.gov.au/request](https://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/request)  
[customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au)

Stay informed

[murrindindi.vic.gov.au/news](https://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/news)  
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# Longwood Fire Event



## Support Resources

### Mental Health Services

Experiencing a disaster can be overwhelming. It can affect your mind, body and emotions. Across our community, people have had very different experiences of this fire, and all of them are valid.

Some are dealing with significant loss. Many may feel stressed, anxious or unsettled, even if they were not directly impacted. For some, this event may have brought back difficult memories from past bushfires, along with feelings of sadness, fear or grief.

If this is how you're feeling, you are not alone. Recovery looks different for everyone, and it can take time. Strong emotions are a natural response to what is happening.

Talking about how you're feeling and staying connected to others can help. What matters now is that we are all in this together. Looking out for one another, checking in, and offering kindness can make a real difference. If you are finding things hard, asking for support is a sign of strength, and often the first step in recovery.

### Support and advice is available:

Call Triple Zero (**000**) if you are in immediate danger.

Lifeline (Crisis support): **13 11 14** (24/7)

1800 Respect (Family violence support): **1800 737 732** (24/7)

Emergency Recovery Hotline: **1800 560 760**

You're also welcome to drop into one of our Library and Customer Service Centres for a quiet space, a conversation, or simply to be around others.

For more resources visit our website at [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth) or visit the VicEmergency website at [emergency.vic.gov.au/relief](http://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief)

### Clean-up support for the January 2026 bushfires

The Victorian Government is rolling out a State-coordinated clean-up program to support people impacted by the January 2026 bushfires. Help to clean up uninsured or underinsured homes will be available soon.

You can register your details to be notified when clean-up support starts. Updates will be sent by email or SMS and will include what type of clean-up support is available, who is eligible, how to register, information about other supports as they become available.

Register online through the Victorian Government website at [vic.gov.au/clean-support-january-2026-bushfires](http://vic.gov.au/clean-support-january-2026-bushfires)

### Council's Bushfire Information Hubs

We know many in our community are facing a tough time after the fires. If you need help accessing financial support payments or connecting with other services, please call the Emergency Recovery Victoria Hotline on 1800 560 760 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday. Press 9 for an interpreter or call TIS on 131 450.

There is also support in person at different locations across our Shire, where Council staff and agency representatives are assisting people with accessing relief payments and linking them in with other support services.

Visit one of the following locations:

- Alexandra Library Bushfire Information Hub
- Yea Library Bushfire Information Hub
- Yarck Hall Bushfire Information Hub - opening times yet to be confirmed

For library opening times, visit [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/libraries](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/libraries)

Over the coming weeks, we hope to have representatives from the DFFH and other agencies available at Alexandra and Yea Libraries and Yarck Hall to provide extra help and advice.

We're also supporting the many locally-led relief centres with immediate needs where we can, in collaboration with local community groups and organisations, this includes the provision of laptops, internet access (if not already established) and resources to support residents in Yarck, Fawcett, Highlands and Terip Terip access the services they need.

Please share this information with anyone who may benefit. We're here to help.

To keep up to date with the latest updates contact:

VicEmergency - 1800 226 226  
[emergency.vic.gov.au/relief](http://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief)

Murrindindi Shire Council - 5772 0333  
[murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire)



**Get in touch**  
5772 0333  
[murrindindi.vic.gov.au/request](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/request)  
[customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au)

**Stay informed**  
[murrindindi.vic.gov.au/news](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/news)  
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## Advice from Warren Davies, The Unbreakable Farmer

AFTER the first few days of a disaster, things get quieter and often harder.

This is when tiredness hits. This is when emotions show up. This is when people wonder why they're not 'back to normal'.

If that's you please know this: What you're feeling is common. It doesn't mean you're weak.

Focus on:

one small step at a time

food, water, rest

talking to one safe person

accepting help

Recovery isn't tidy. And you don't have to rush it.

## Protecting underground utilities

BYDA is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers a vital national community service designed to help prevent damage and disruption to Australia's vast utility networks such as electricity, gas, water and telecommunications.

Protecting Australia's underground infrastructure is crucial in keeping these essential services flowing to the community.

BYDA promotes asset protection and the importance of safe digging practices by providing everyone working in and around underground infrastructure with the best possible access to plans and information directly from asset owners of utility services via the free BYD referral service.

Most of Australia's asset owners are BYDA Members, so using the BYD service is a single point of contact to obtain information about what infrastructure lies underground at the planned project site without contacting utility organisations individually.

Any project, including work on private properties, can damage assets near your dig site, leading to service interruptions, delays, costly repairs and in the worst-case scenario, injury or death. Obtaining information from asset owners via the referral service can significantly minimise these risks.

Lodging an enquiry is a free and simple process: online via the website [byda.com.au](http://byda.com.au), or via the BYDA iPhone and Android mobile apps.

Safety is a fundamental aspect of any excavation project, so the BYD service should always be the first point of contact. For more information, visit [byda.com.au](http://byda.com.au)

## Fire cause under investigation

VICTORIA Police have advised, "As a consequence of the extreme weather events last week Victoria experienced a large number of fires, some of which are still burning.

"Victoria Police continues to work with its partner agencies in response to these fires.

"At this time, the overwhelming majority of fires are believed to be as a result of natural causes.

"The major fires, including those in Longwood, Ravenswood South and Walwa, are still under investigation to determine the cause.

"Such investigations are complex in nature and it would be premature to provide causal factor updates at this time.

"When police are in a position to provide confirmed information about the cause of any fire, we will do so.

"The investigation into the cause of the Longwood fire and the associated death is being led by detectives from the Arson and Explosives Squad.

"This investigation remains ongoing including the process to formally identify the person located deceased in the Longwood fire."

## Ruffy: A community decimated but surviving

by Bailey Dixon

THE community has suffered an immense tragedy in the past two weeks, with so many small towns decimated by the Longwood bushfire. Houses have been lost, sheds full of assets, livestock, fencing, tractors.

Ruffy is among them. The Ruffy Recreation Reserve and the old school are gone. The fields are black, and the sides of the roads still smoke and smoulder. Enormous amounts of work have been, and are being done, to remove trees that have fallen across roads, blocking locals from returning.

There is no way to put into words the loss and hardship faced by members of the community, as there are so many individual stories and tragedies. Some stayed to fight the fire. Some evacuated and returned to a broken town. Every person has felt the impact in some way.

As it stands, Ruffy is deep into clean-up and rebuild. The Ruffy Hall and the Ruffy CFA shed are hubs of activity. People grab supplies, reorienting themselves, working out what the next step is.

The hall is full to overflowing with donated goods, and a team of volunteers work tirelessly to keep it ordered and provide information for people seeking certain items. CFA comes and goes from the CFA shed, managing the risk, constantly working. Dinner is provided at the hall, giving locals the opportunity to feed themselves, have a cool drink, and talk with other members of the community. There are showers, and internet, and CFA providing updates about what is happening.

A hub for hay and water has been set-up, and trucks come and go along the roads, carting water, delivering hay, moving livestock and earthmoving equipment.

There are an enormous amount of utes moving around, clearing fallen trees, fixing fencing, checking on stock, moving supplies to where they need to go.

Unfortunately, Ruffy is not the only community affected by this bushfire. Various other small towns scattered across the hill, from Longwood to Terip Terip to Gobur to Yarck and Molesworth, have been affected by this fire.

So much support has been given, through supplies and incredible volunteers and more, and the community is slowly fighting to recover, but more will be needed. There is a gargantuan amount of work to be done, and for many people, life can't go back to being the same as it was before.

Ruffy is a strong and resilient community, with proud residents. To everyone in the thick of it, hang in there.

## Water safety after fires

BUSHFIRES do not just affect the air quality. They can affect water quality too. Especially after the first time it rains.

If you are returning home, or living near a fire impacted area, here is what you need to know.

Private drinking water like tanks and dams:

If your tank water looks, smells or tastes unusual, do not drink it.

If fire suppressants or foams were sprayed on your property and your roof feeds your tank, do not use the tank water.

Use bottled water for drinking.

Recreational waterways like beaches, lakes, rivers, streams:

Rain after bushfires can wash ash, debris and chemicals into waterways.

Avoid contact with fire affected waterways. This means things like swimming, boating and fishing.

Boiling water may not be enough to make it safe to drink.

Blackwater and fish death events may happen after rain.

Fire fighters in Victoria no longer use PFAS in their fire suppressants.

Victorian Department of Health have information on their website for private drinking water: [bit.ly/3LPqHbA](http://bit.ly/3LPqHbA)

Read bushfires and water quality what you need to know: [bit.ly/4bB5Y5Q](http://bit.ly/4bB5Y5Q)

Read about fire suppressants and your health: [bit.ly/49XIDLx](http://bit.ly/49XIDLx)

## Alexandra Pro Rodeo postponed until April

ALEXANDRA has been significantly impacted by the recent fires. Many people in our community have lost homes, others have lost stock, fencing, sheds, or parts of their property. As a town, we are now moving from initial response into recovery, and that will take time. Current advice is that this fire event will continue to be active for weeks to come.

Every member of the Alexandra Pro Rodeo committee is deeply involved in different parts of the emergency and recovery effort right now. Because of this, and out of respect for what our community is dealing with, they have made the decision not to run the Alexandra Pro Rodeo.

Instead, the Alexandra Pro Rodeo will be postponed until April 2026, with the exact date to be confirmed shortly.

But there is an opportunity in this pause.

With time now on their side, the committee want to dedicate the 2026 Alexandra Pro Rodeo to rebuilding our community. This will be a disaster recovery-focused event. A bigger event, more entertainment, a stronger rodeo program, more for families and visitors, and more opportunities to directly support Alexandra and the people affected by these fires.

The committee are no strangers to using their events to back important local causes. Over the years, they have helped fund and

build community infrastructure, supported men's health initiatives through our hospital, invested in aged care, and much more. This time, the cause is personal. These fires have hit close to home, and they have affected people we know, work with, and care about.

So we are all in on making the April edition of the Alexandra Pro Rodeo the very best it can be, and using it to support the community in a meaningful way.

Is that something you could get behind? Are you keen to see the strongest Alexandra Pro Rodeo ever run?

The committee know there will be questions, particularly around tickets. Existing tickets will automatically transfer to the new April date. They also understand the new date may suit some people better than others, and that's okay. They will work through those details and share clear information shortly.

For now, the committee ask just three things: Please don't come to Alexandra for the rodeo. If you're keen for rodeo, consider supporting another event elsewhere; keep community and emergency crews front of mind over the coming weeks; watch this space. The committee will be announcing the new April date very soon.

Thank you for your understanding, your patience, and your continued support of Alexandra.

## Community Thank You Dinner: supporting our local fire crews

A COMMUNITY Thank You Dinner Gala is being planned to honour our incredible local fire crews and volunteers who went above and beyond during the recent fires. Many put their own lives and homes at risk, and some even lost their own, yet still turned out to protect our community. Their selflessness and courage truly deserve recognition.

This event will be our way of saying thank you as a community. a night of gratitude, appreciation and togetherness.

They're inviting businesses and individuals, both local and from beyond the area, to be part of this special event through donations or sponsorship. Contributions could include accommodation or experience vouchers, raffle prizes or gift hampers, or food, drinks or decorations.

Every donation, big or small, will directly help make this event a wonderful and

memorable evening for the people who gave everything to protect others.

If you or your business would like to be involved or donate a prize, voucher or contribution, please reach out, they'd love to hear from you.

Let's come together to give back to those who have given so much for us.

The event is still a few months away, as we want to ensure careful planning and coordination.

Thank you for your generosity and community spirit.

The event is planned for March 28 from 5.30pm at the Alexandra Football Netball Club rooms. \$60 per person, discount for CFA members.

Visit [facebook.com/profile.php?id=61586661571983](https://facebook.com/profile.php?id=61586661571983)

## Bushfire road repairs

ALMOST \$82 million has been announced to restore and repair state roads and public transport infrastructure damaged by the January 2026 Victorian bushfires, ensuring critical transport links are restored for regional communities.

Of that, up to \$44 million is for emergency works which will be funded by the Federal and state governments under joint Commonwealth State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The Victorian Government will fund a further \$37 million.

This builds upon previously announced support and responds directly to needs identified by affected communities as they start their recovery journey.

The fire has resulted in a significant impact not only on the road surfaces but also critical roadside and safety infrastructure including barriers, signage and vegetation as well as the strain to roads from heavy machinery used for tree clearing on the roads.

Crews will be out repairing wire rope and guard rails, cleaning up trees and debris, making sure signage remains intact and undertaking road repairs, supporting local economies and businesses, which rely on safe and accessible roads.

# AusNet strike teams restoring power for bushfire-affected properties

AUSNET is prioritising power restoration for homes and businesses in the Walwa and Longwood bushfire-affected regions, with strike teams currently on site. Their Bushfire Recovery Teams will continue to assess and restore power as quickly and safely as possible. This will involve rebuilding the network in areas that are severely impacted.

## Longwood region

AusNet have been conducting aerial inspections of the network in this area via helicopters and continue to work with emergency authorities. They identified around 140 poles and other electricity infrastructure that need to be replaced.

They hope to be able to complete all assessments and provide updates to customers, including any estimated restoration times, by the end of the weekend.

They acknowledge that this is a difficult time for many communities and understand the importance of knowing when power will be restored. Teams are working hard so that people can plan their return to their communities.

AusNet's Emergency Management Mobile Assistance Vehicles (EMMAs) will be located in bushfire-affected community areas to provide information and support, help people charge their devices and to access the internet to check in with family and friends. Specific

locations and times will be updated on their Facebook page.

## Prolonged power outage payment

The Victorian and Federal Governments are providing financial relief to households impacted by the January 2026 bushfires and heatwave.

Subject to specific eligibility criteria, residential customers without power for seven cumulative days January 7, 2026 will be eligible for \$2380 per week for up to three weeks.

AusNet will directly contact all customers who are eligible for this Prolonged Power Outage Payment, inviting them to apply.

Further information on eligibility and how to apply for the PPOP is available on AusNet's website: [www.ausnet.com.au/emergency-response](http://www.ausnet.com.au/emergency-response)

## Assistance and further information

AusNet's Bushfire Support line is open 8am to 8pm seven days a week on 1300 561 171 for questions about recovery, support and re-establishing electricity connections. Customers can continue to report any faults to 13 17 99. They ask that people stay clear of any damaged infrastructure or powerlines for their own safety.



*The Incident Control Centre would like to thank all the people that have offered support and well wishes for crews out there battling the beast and not forgetting the huge team of people behind the scenes in the Seymour Incident Control Centre (ICC), making sure the crews are fed, watered accommodated and provided maps and anything else they need to work through their shift. Photo of the Incident Management Team at the Seymour ICC at their briefing before night shift. -Claire Cowton*

## AV paramedics relocated from stations during fire danger period

AMBULANCE Victoria (AV) declared a Red Escalation for their service across Victoria at 7am on Friday, January 9, in response to the catastrophic fire danger declaration for the South West, Wimmera, North Central and North Country regions and in consultation with emergency service partners.

What this meant was that paramedics and first responders within declared regions of catastrophic fire danger risk were relocated for their own safety, where those branches had been identified as high-risk due to their proximity to bushland and limited road access.

Ambulance Victoria said in their press release that crews would only be redeployed into these zones in the case of serious or life-threatening illness and only after a thorough risk assessment to consider the safety of their people.

A number of Ambulance Victoria paramedic branches that were temporarily relocated for safety reasons during the catastrophic fire danger on Friday, January 9, returned to their locations on Saturday, January 10, following updated advice from emergency management authorities. During this time, paramedics continued to respond to emergency cases in affected communities where it was safe to do so.

On Saturday, January 10 at 7pm, Ambulance Victoria downgraded the statewide Red Escalation to an Orange level for the bushfires. This reflected a reduction in forecast fire danger, while recognising that active bushfires and ongoing heat conditions continue to present risks in some areas. This allowed even more branches to return to their locations.

It is unclear from this how long the period of time was during the Longwood bushfire emergency where AV stations in regions of catastrophic fire danger risk were without personnel, but a period of time did exist.

## Farmers: register for support

RURAL Aid is issuing an urgent call for all Victorian farmers to register for assistance as bushfires continue to burn across the state, already causing widespread damage to farmland, major stock losses, and destruction of critical agricultural infrastructure.

With fires impacting multiple regions and conditions remaining volatile, producers are facing escalating threats to livestock, crops, fencing, sheds, machinery, water supplies, and their livelihoods.

Rural Aid is urging every primary producer impacted by the fires to register now, so assistance can be mobilised without delay as the emergency unfolds.

Rural Aid Chief Executive Officer John Warlters said the fires are already inflicting serious damage and the full impact is still emerging.

"We saw fires tear through productive farmland, destroy fencing and sheds, and leave farmers facing heartbreaking stock losses," Mr Warlters said.

"These aren't isolated incidents. Large parts of the state were being impacted, and many producers are under immediate and extreme pressure."

Mr Warlters said registering with Rural Aid is one of the most important steps farmers can take right now.

"Registering now means that we can respond with financial assistance, hay, water and counselling support."

Rural Aid provides support to registered farmers at no cost, including:

Financial assistance for urgent and unexpected expenses

Professional counselling and wellbeing support for farmers and their families

Emergency hay deliveries to support livestock

Water deliveries for drinking and household needs

Volunteer assistance through the Farm Army program for response and recovery

Farmers are strongly urged to register immediately at [faa.ruralaid.org.au](http://faa.ruralaid.org.au) or by calling 1300 327 624. Registering now ensures Rural Aid can act fast and deliver critical support.

Rural Aid is Australia's leading rural charity, committed to supporting farmers and rural communities through good times and tough. Since 2015, Rural Aid has been a vital lifeline in times of hardship, delivering practical assistance such as mental health counselling, hay, drinking water, and community connection initiatives. The organisation continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with rural Australians, helping them overcome hardship, build resilience, and create stronger, more sustainable futures.

Minister for Emergency Services Vicki Ward said, "With more funding on offer than ever before, almost double, we're showing our determination to support our hardworking emergency services volunteers."

## Kinglake SES receives replacement rescue vehicle under VESEP

THE Kinglake SES is celebrating the arrival of a replacement rescue vehicle, funded through the Victorian Government's Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP).

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes announced the 4WD Ute has been delivered, which will serve as an OPS support vehicle, ensuring volunteers have the equipment they need to assist the community. This vehicle was funded through the 2024-25 round of VESEP grant program, Kinglake SES received \$97,000.

VESEP is an annual grant program that supports Victorian emergency services volunteer groups to purchase essential equipment or upgrade facilities so they

can continue their vital work protecting communities. Funding can be used to purchase equipment such as tankers, trucks, utility vehicles, generators and pumps, as well as refurbishments or upgrades to facilities.

This year's VESEP grants deliver more than \$30 million in funding, the largest ever, including almost \$20 million for more than 40 vehicles, more than \$5 million for facility upgrades and more than \$1 million for operational equipment across CFA, VICSES, Life Saving Victoria, Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue and other volunteer emergency service organisations.

Thanks to the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, VESEP funding has been doubled over the next four years with an

additional \$62 million invested to support volunteers. Every dollar raised through the fund goes directly to emergency and disaster recovery services.

Over the past decade, the state government has invested more than \$168 million in VESEP grants, ensuring volunteers have the resources they need to protect Victorians. A full list of this year's VESEP grants is available at [emv.vic.gov.au/vesep](http://emv.vic.gov.au/vesep)

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes said, "The volunteers of the Kinglake SES are always there when the community needs them, which is why it's so important that they have the equipment that they need to keep the community safe."

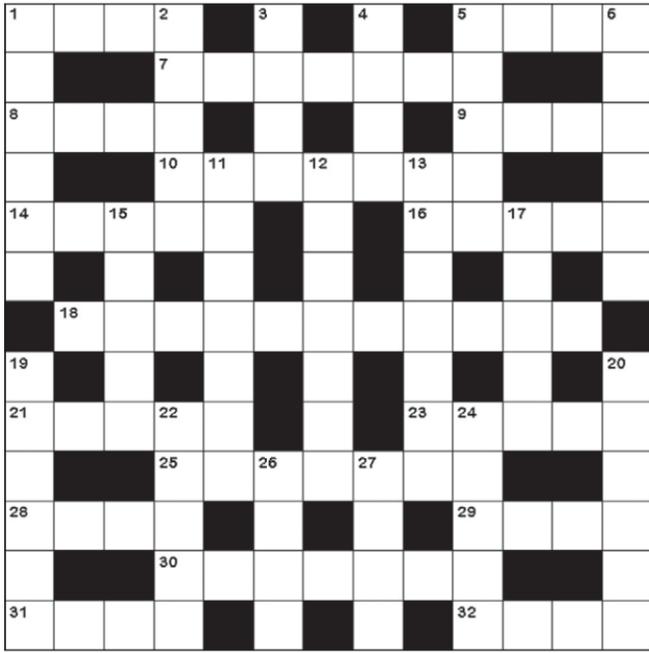
# PUZZLES

**SOLUTIONS**  
Page 21

## Crossword

### ACROSS

- A large group of animals living together.
- Fail to include or mention something.
- An arc of colored light in the sky.
- An unclothed human figure.
- The middle of the day.
- A flat heated surface on which food is cooked.
- The amount a salary is increased.
- Present reasons for and against.
- One who believes in the equality of all people.
- The profoundly evil adversary of God.
- A V-shaped indentation carved into wood.
- A person who moves into new country.
- A euphemistic expression for death.
- Inevitable destruction or ruin.
- To act or perform an action.
- The edible flesh of animals.
- The hard outer covering or skin on fruit.



- Laid out in bed.
- A person who has possession of something.
- Looked after someone with great care.
- Lie in a comfortable resting position.
- A person qualified to treat and repair teeth.
- A public toilet in a military area.
- Oblong piece of cast metal, especially of gold.
- Grow together parts from different plants.
- A shelter from danger or hardship.
- Brought dishonour or disgrace upon.
- A useful or valuable quality.
- Tell somebody to do something.
- Fastened with strings or cords.
- An awkward stupid person.

### DOWN

- The need or desire to eat food.
- Sediment settled at the bottom of a liquid.
- Nocturnal flightless bird of New Zealand.

## Word Search

A O G N I D A N M K G U X P L  
K U Y N I Z O L B I X A K M A  
K Y S A F E S Q A B C Y L C D  
A P D T M G P E G O T A S T P  
N S O U R O X Y U U K V L J J  
G E W V L A D T M Q I C K Z G  
A D N K I T L Q S C E B T D Z  
R U U C Q J L I T K I B C I T  
O J N M A E V O A X M B R D X  
O D D S W N R A I N A M S A T  
X C E Q T I B X V E F M T O B  
S A R M A W D E E W N L I T Q  
C R I C K E T F R Z C H A K V  
Z B R X T E D B N R H I T G Y  
S O U T H A U S T R A L I A P

### Australia Day

- AUSTRALIANFLAG
- BARBEQUES
- CANBERRA
- CRICKET
- DINGO
- DOWNUNDER
- EMU
- KANGAROO
- KOALA
- SOUTH AUSTRALIA
- TASMANIA
- VICTORIA

## Math Square

1	+		-		-1
-		x		+	
4	-		-		-11
÷		+		+	
	-		+		5
-1		30		21	

### Fill in the missing numbers

The missing values are the whole numbers between 1 and 9.  
Each number is only used once.  
Each row is a math equation.  
Each column is a math equation.  
Remember that multiplication and division are performed before addition and subtraction.

## Sudoku

8	4		1	5	3
	1		8	9	7 2
	5				
	4 9	5	6		
	8 6			7 4	
		4	3	9 6	
				5	
5 3		7	1	2	
4	2	3	1	7	

### Difficulty: Very Hard

Fill in the boxes using the numbers 1 to 9.  
Every row and column and every group of 9 boxes inside the thicker lines must contain each number and letter only once.

## Cryptogram

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
8										15				18											

A L A L L L O



Photo by Susie Cipriani 2025

## Another successful year for the Alexandra Christmas Tree Festival

DURING December the Alexandra Community Christmas Tree Festival was open and had over 3000 visitors from all parts of Victoria and interstate; they even had visitors from Norway via FaceTime.

With 87 businesses, schools and community groups decorating trees, the Alexandra Shire Hall was Christmas spirit on steroids. There were trees and decorations handmade, clever use of decorations and an extraordinary wonderland to get lost in. The People's Choice winner was Cipriani Cafe and W.I.L.D Gallery with Susie's Alexandra Xmas Bush Choir and bringing up the top five were Alexandra Kindergarten, Menzies

Horticulture Group, Dindi Dance and Body and Wellness.

Check out the Facebook page for all pictures of the trees.

The festival would not happen without the continued support from the committee, the volunteers that move trees, unpack, set up, man the hall, install outside decorations, pack up, bake and make for the trading table, and the donors of raffle prizes. All of these people truly help to make the festival a community event and the committee says thank you.

If you would like to get involved with the festival to ensure this great event continues, please contact Pam 0415 476 639.

# IMAGES FROM THE LONGWOOD FIRE



*A tree on the Andana Executive Retreat grounds in Yarck. -John*



*The ride survived. -Andrea Donnellan*



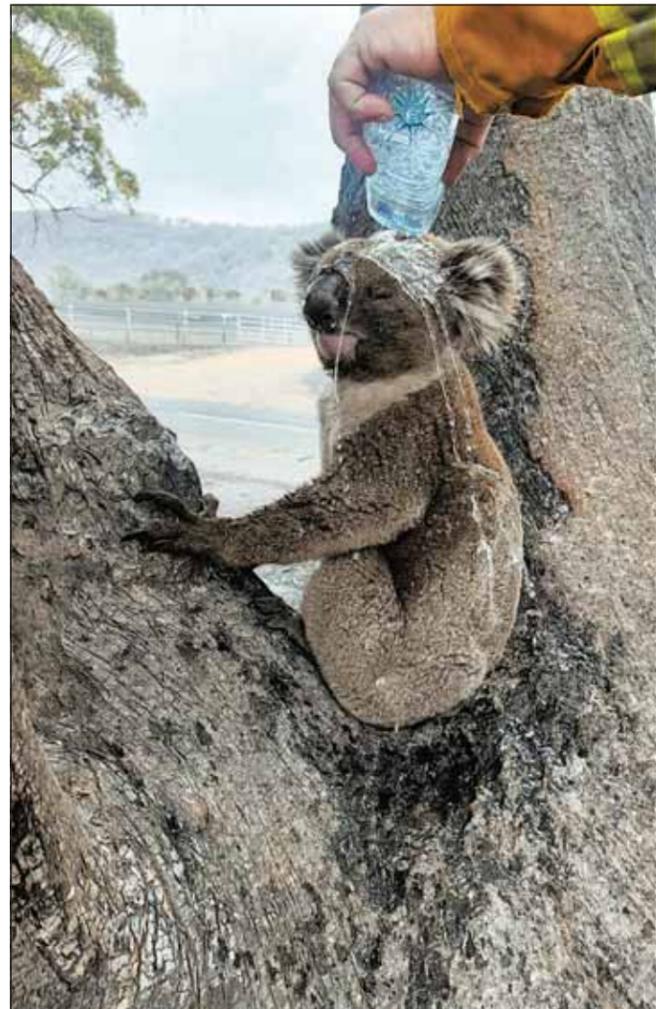
*The approaching fire. -Louise Jayne*



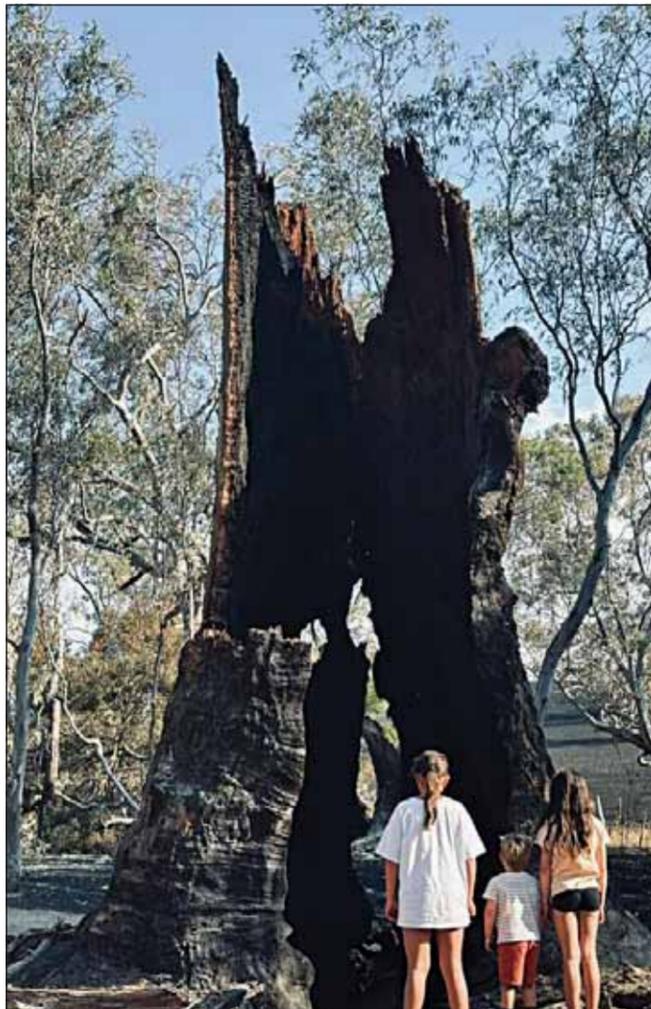
*The Halligan farm in Yarck with locals fighting the fire to save the township. -Rachael Reichert*



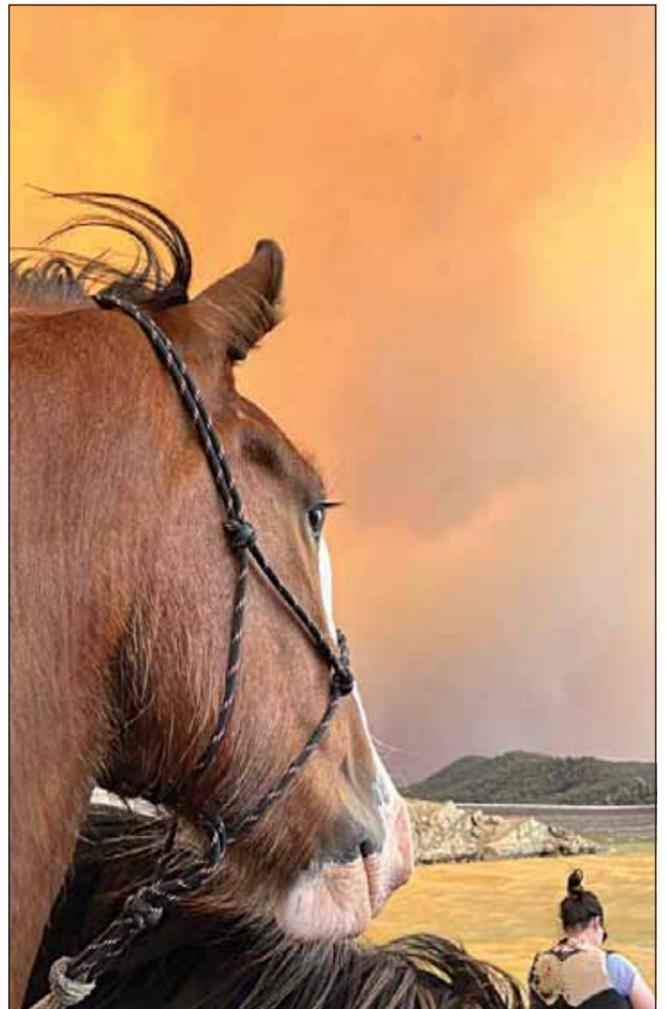
*Smoke in Yea. -Louise Jayne*



*A CFA member helping a koala to cool down. -Sarah Brockhus, Benalla CFA*



*Children looking at a burnt out tree. -Amy Reece*



*A photo taken at the Eildon Boat Ramp during the fire emergency. -Nicole Kelly*

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Warren Davies, The Unbreakable Farmer, with Caolan O'Connor from Alexandra Events, in front of the new Murrindindi Mobile Health Van in Rotary Park. -S

# Murrindindi Mobile Health Van lauched and deployed

THE Murrindindi Mobile Health Van was deployed to Rotary Park last week, providing timely mental health support for members of the community, following its launch at the Yea Saleyards on Wednesday, January 7.

The van is an Alexandra Events initiative funded by local community groups, individuals, and Jayco Australia, being a purpose-built outreach vehicle designed to bring essential medical and wellbeing services straight to communities across the shire, improving access to healthcare where it's needed most. Over \$114,000 was raised for the project at the Alexandra Truck Ute and Rod Show weekend in June of 2025.

Members of the community flocked to the Yea Saleyards to see the new van, and guest speakers included Murrindindi Shire Council Mayor Damien Gallagher, Acting Chair of Yea and District Memorial Hospital Ian Marshman, Warren Davies, The Unbreakable Farmer, Caolan O'Connor from Alexandra Events Corporation Ltd, Gerry Ryan from Jayco Australia and Andrew Embling from Victorian Livestock and Property. The keys were officially handed over by Gerry Ryan, owner and founder of Jayco Australia.

When the van was deployed to Rotary Park last week, Warren Davies, The Unbreakable Farmer, was available for a chat for anyone who simply needs someone to talk to, and Cassandra Fraser, Nurse Practitioner on the Run, was also operating from the van, with additional services available.

The last couple of weeks have shown just how resilient and supportive our community is. Neighbours looking out for neighbours, stepping up when it matters most. That support is incredibly important. Professional help matters too.



The Murrindindi Mobile Health Van was parked in Rotary Park last week, providing mental health support to the community. -S

# PUZZLES SOLUTIONS

## CRYPTOGRAM

AUSTRALIANS ALL LET US REJOICE

### CROSSWORD

H	E	R	D	K	A	O	M	I	T
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## TRADES ADVERTISING DEADLINE NOON THURSDAY

The Alexandra Standard and The Yea Chronicle are printed by North East Media, Wangaratta.

Print Post Approved - PP 10000292.

### BARGAINS UNDER \$100

ALEXANDRA, three Bburago Ferraris, Excellent condition, one in original box. \$99. Ph 0412 212 764.

YARCK, 10" x 4.5" sediment and carbon block filters, \$35/pair. 20" x 4.5" sediment and carbon block filters, \$50/pair fits big blue canisters. Ph 0414 718 812.

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### FOR HIRE

**FITNESS EQUIPMENT**  
Rental and Sales  
Alexandra  
Treadmills, X-trainers, exercise bikes, rowers and more.  
PH:0407 231 377



### FOR SALE

ORGANIC liquid fertiliser, \$2 per litre. Two electric meat slicers, \$25 each. One micro oven, \$30. Ph 0417 552 493.

### LOST & FOUND

FOUND - girls watch. Francis Street Yea. Contact Colin and identify it if it belongs to you 0408 173 338.

### PETS & LIVESTOCK

ISA BROWN LAYERS - POL, \$35 each. Ph 5798 1868. Pick-up in Alexandra or Yea. beckysfrerange@gmail.com



Deals on Wheels  
PAY FOR ONE WEEK AND GET 7 WEEKS FREE!



### SITUATION VACANT



#### Learning Support Officer

St Mary's Alexandra is seeking a reliable and enthusiastic person to join our team.

- The successful applicant will:
- Hold a Working With Children Check and Police Check
  - Have experience working with children
  - Be passionate about supporting a positive and caring school environment

If this sounds like you, we'd love to hear from you.

St Mary's Primary School Alexandra applications close on February 7 at 4pm. Please email your application to [cirwin@smalexandra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:cirwin@smalexandra.catholic.edu.au)

### IN MEMORIAM

**BELLMAN, Ronnie**  
22/01/1964 - 14/01/2025

Our lives go on without you, but nothing is the same. We have to hide our heartache, when someone speaks your name. Sad are the hearts that love you, silent are the tears that fall. Living life without you, is the hardest part of all; You did so many things for us, your heart was kind and true. And when we needed someone, we could always count on you. The special years will not return, when we are all together; But with the love in our hearts, you walk with us forever.  
Love and miss you so much, Laurinda and Jake xx

When God was making husbands, as far as I can see; He made a special soulmate, especially for me; He made a perfect gentleman, compassionate and kind; With more love and affection, than you could ever wish to find; He gave my darling husband, a heart of solid gold; He gave me wonderful memories, only my heart can hold; He was someone I could talk to, that no one can replace; He was someone I could laugh with, till tears ran down my face; Next time we meet, will be at heaven's door; When I see you standing there, I won't cry anymore; I will put my arms around you and kiss your smiling face; Then the pieces of my broken heart, will fall back into place.  
Miss you so much babe. I will honour your birthday with a cold VB or two.  
Laurinda xo

### MEETINGS

AGM for the Alexandra RSL will be held on Sunday, February 15, at noon, followed by a general meeting

### IN MEMORIAM

**BELLMAN, Ron.**  
Remembering Ron. 22/01/1964 - 14/01/2025. "It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you. It's what you leave behind you when you go." Remembered every day, by mum and Barry. RIP.

**MOORE, Norma Joan.**  
15/06/1931 - 19/01/2025. 'Handmaid of the Lord.' Mum, you and Auntie June, have finally risen above the challenges, coercive control and betrayals experience on your Earthly journeys. Both together now as ever loving sisters and daughters (with Fay) of Nan and Pa Bradshaw. One year on I'm still grieving your passing and praying, we'll also take bucket loads of love, faith and hope. You perfected within the fiery furnace of your life - as mothers, aunts, nanas, great nanas, friends and wives to join you in your eternal home. Your loving daughter, Rose La Vie, Jen, Emma, Aimee, David and Elena who miss you the most.



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### DEATH NOTICES

**SKINNER, Julie May**  
29/08/1938 - 08/01/2026

Passed away peacefully on January 8 at Kellock Lodge.

Beloved mum of Debbie and Karen. Loved nana to Nathan, Justin, Matthew, Jordan, Raphael, Dylan and Lachlan.

Loved great nana to Tahlia, Bella, Alisa and Andrey.

We are very thankful for the compassionate support and care from all Kellock Lodge staff and Dr Lachlan Fraser.

Private funeral.

**LOND, Roma, Lilian.**  
08/10/1925 - 08/01/2026

Passed away at Darlingford Nursing Home.

Loved wife of Graham (dec). Much loved mother of Gail and Stephen (dec). Fond mother in law of Putu and Angela. Loved grandma to Shelley, Justin, Shannon, Chris and Kate, Rachel and Kelly. Great grandma of 12. Great great grandma of two. She will be missed so much for her fun and humor and kindness to us all. Private funeral.

# Council advances Eildon Key Worker Housing Project

MURRINDINDI Shire Council is set to commence civil works in early January 2026 for the Eildon Key Worker Housing Project, marking a major step in addressing local workforce housing needs.

This project will deliver 33 bedrooms of dedicated accommodation for key workers across two council-owned sites at 10 Eighth Street and 18 Twenty-First Street, Eildon.

The development is funded in partnership with the Victorian Government's Regional Worker Accommodation Fund and aims to address housing shortages for essential workers such as health professionals, teachers, and hospitality staff.

Council adopted its Key Worker Housing Strategy in 2024, opting to develop these sites rather than sell them, a decision that reflects local needs and strengthens Eildon's economy and services. By developing the sites rather than selling to a developer, council retains greater control over the built form, and long-term use.

Houses are being constructed off-site and will be transported to Eildon for installation from February 2026. This modern, sustainable approach accelerates delivery while maintaining high quality.

Council awarded construction contracts in August 2025 to Millbuilt Pty Ltd and JMB Constructions (AUST) Pty Ltd following a rigorous assessment process, after issuing a Notice of Decision to Grant Planning Permits for both sites.

Council's Economic Development, Local Jobs, and Skills portfolio Councillor Sandice McAulay, said this project will make a real difference in Murrindindi Shire.

"The Eildon Key Worker Housing Project is a practical response to a real and pressing issue. By investing in housing for the people who keep our communities running, we're ensuring Eildon and the broader Murrindindi Shire remain vibrant and continue to grow," Cr McAulay said.

This project complements the recently completed Eildon Reserves Redevelopment, which has revitalised community recreation spaces and delivered new attractions including a splash park, skate park and upgraded public facilities. Income from key worker housing rentals and/or future sale of the dwellings will replenish council's contribution to the reserves redevelopment project, in line with the original intent for developing this land.

Council thanks the Victorian Government for its support and will continue to keep the community informed as this important project progresses.

For more information and updates, visit [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/eildonkeyworkerproject](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/eildonkeyworkerproject) or call (03) 5772 0333.

[This information was released prior to the fire emergency, so the works may have been delayed. -Ed]

# IMAGES FROM THE LONGWOOD FIRE



Near the Alexandra Speedway looking towards Yarck on Friday, January 9 at around 3pm. -Matt Gerakis



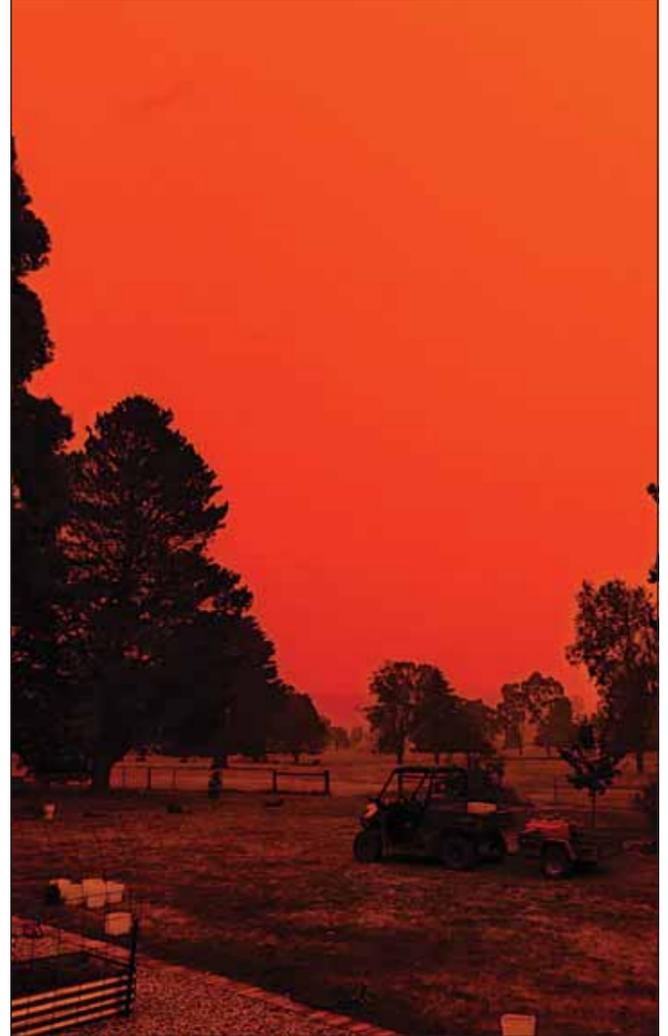
A photo taken from a back door in Bonnie Doon. -S



Around 2pm on Friday, January 9, outside Yea. -Michelle Bissels



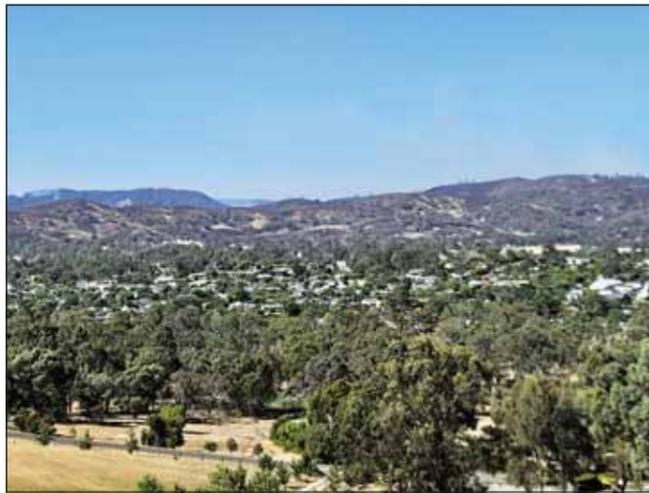
A fire refugee. -Leesey Gee



Bonfire Station at Taggerty. -Khit



The fire approaching Merton. -Glenn Ballard



A view of the burnt hills around Alexandra. -Mick Taylor



Limestone on Friday evening. -David Wareham



Daisy's brother Patrick with the Taggerty CFA. -Daisy Birtchnell

# IMAGES FROM THE LONGWOOD FIRE



*A burning stump. -Mikayala Williams*



*The view from Yea at night on Thursday, January 8. -Kirsty Pepper*



*Longwood on Thursday morning. -Shane Frea*



*The burnt landscape near Killingworth. -Mikayala Williams*



*Ruffy, the day before the fire. -Jasmine Tobias*



*Heroes at the front of the fire at Sally's home in Kanumbra. -Sally Townsend*



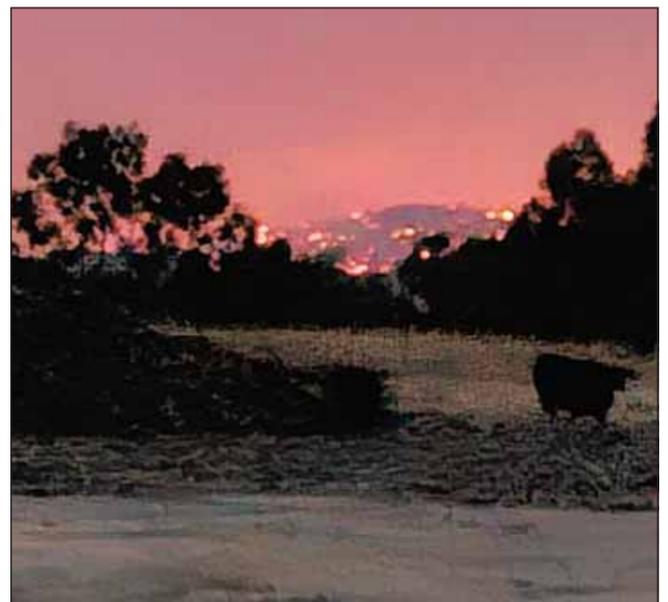
*The view from Endicott Road, Alexandra. -Judith Plant Brady*



*Bon Street in Alexandra at 2.30pm on Friday, January 9, awaiting the fire front. -Amanda Moore*



*2.14pm on Friday in Whanregarwen. -Melissa Bristow*



*Killingworth looking towards the Molesworth hills on Friday night. -Mikayala Williams*

# IMAGES FROM THE LONGWOOD FIRE



The Penny family home in Terip Terip. -Jodie Penny



Devastation as far as the eye can see. -Brooke Cowling



SES members were a great support for the CFA during the fire. -S



Julie and Julie with Alexandra CFA Captain Chris Lynch. -S



People in Yea cheering the arrival of the Hay Runners. -Dale McKeon, Plymouth Dale Photography



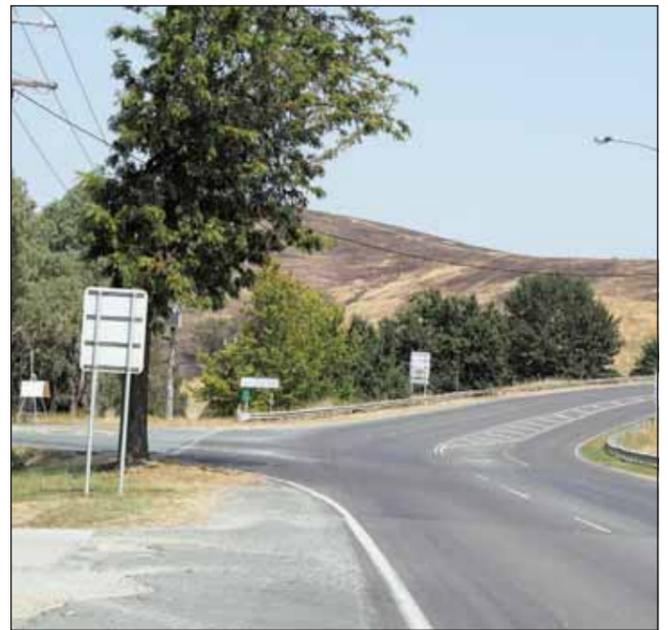
Yarck CFA Captain Kelly Wilkinson. The sender of the photo said, "These photos don't really tell the story as she is now looking much better. She slept at the station on a very uncomfortable couch for four nights. No shower. No cooking facilities. She spent most of the week out on the fireground fighting the intense fire and performing captain duties, directing Yarck Brigade and all of the many other Strike Teams that have flooded the Yarck brigade with help. She was literally thrown right into the thick of it. Everyone turned to her for help and advice. She is totally and absolutely amazing. A true hero. -S



Jeff Swain commented of his house, "Bloody key doesn't work!" He said, "My army mates were full of helpful suggestions: Try the other key. Is it for the back door? Get in through the window... Santa won't have a problem next Christmas." -via Jeff Swain



Free clothes were made available at Menzies in Alexandra, with the other op shops in the area also helping people with clothing. -S



The road out of Alexandra, heading towards Yarck. -AR



Mount Pleasant Road. -AR



The view to the north from Hobans Road in Acheron. -AR



The view from the Acheron lookout. -AR

# IMAGES FROM THE LONGWOOD FIRE



*The hills at Molesworth. -AR*



*On the road between Alexandra and Yea, the fire damage stopped at Cottons Pinch. -AR*



*The XXXX Ranch in Cathkin was saved using a 1970s truck with a tank on the back. -AR*



*The view on Thursday night from Oswald Drive in Alexandra. -Ann Argent*



*A fire-buckled shed at the XXXX Ranch in Cathkin. -AR*



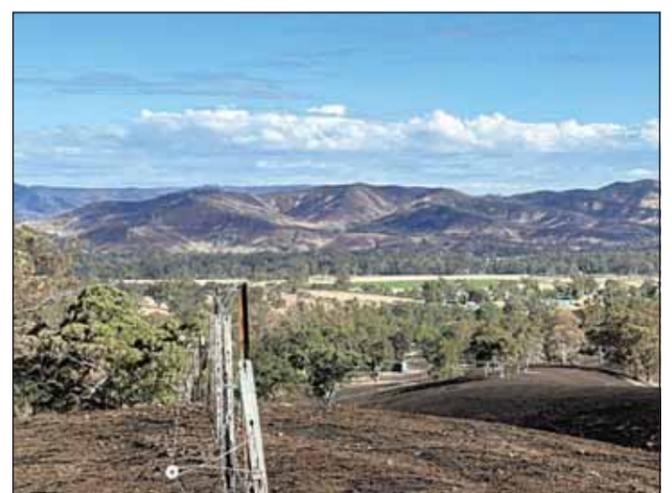
*The firefight. -Trevor Evans*



*Hosing down. -Kim Pammer*



*Cathkin. -AR*



*A burnt fence in a burnt landscape. -Amy Reece*

# One billion in Australian beef exports at risk due to trade restrictions

THE Australian beef industry stands to potentially lose A\$1 billion in exports following the Chinese Ministry of Commerce's (MOFCOM) announcement it will implement global safeguard measures recently.

Cattle Australia Chair, Garry Edwards, said the decision, which comes after a year-long investigation by MOFCOM which was initiated on December 27, 2024 and concluded on 30 December 2025, would unfairly disadvantage Australian beef producers.

"Australia has a long-standing relationship with China as a trusted source of high-quality and safe beef, and we are deeply disappointed

by this decision. A decision we believe to be entirely unwarranted and at odds with the sentiment of the Free Trade Agreement we share," Mr Edwards said.

"Throughout the review process, Australian representatives engaged extensively with Chinese officials, both here and in China, to demonstrate the value of the trade we share and provided formal evidence our imports do not injure the local Chinese beef industry. We strongly believe this decision will erode the access of Chinese consumers to a reliable source of high-quality, safely produced protein.

"Cattle Australia is highly supportive of 'global free trade' with countries, underpinned by minimum equivalent biosecurity and food security standards. We are proud of the trade relationship we have held with China for many years and the abundance of benefits this has brought to both nations, including supporting the Chinese beef industry in growing its own long-term prosperity by providing high quality breeding livestock and superior genetics."

China is a long-term and important market for Australian beef and the new 'safeguard' measures proposed by China at two thirds of the past 12 months (A\$3.3 billion volume) effectively means that this will impact the equivalent of more than \$1 billion in trade.

It is important to note this announcement does not single out Australia and is applicable to all nations, meaning countries including

Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, the United States and New Zealand will also have trade impacted, but it also does not specifically target those countries which have massively altered volumes to the China market.

"The safeguard measures are particularly disappointing for our industry given Australia accounts for only eight per cent of China's beef imports, while other countries have massively increased the volume they supply at lower prices. For example, South America makes up almost 80 per cent of China's overall import volume and this volume has the most direct market correlation to the beef produced domestically in China," Mr Edwards said.

Australian representatives, including Cattle Australia, will now seek further details on the specifics of the safeguard measures and continue to engage with MOFCOM to understand the final decision and find long-term, mutually beneficial outcomes.

"While China is within its rights to impose safeguard measures under certain circumstances, we need more detailed information and discussions to understand why this decision has been made," Mr Edwards said.

"We will continue to work closely with Australian and Chinese representatives to encourage them to take a longer-term view and determine how we can continue to work together for the benefit of each nation's beef industry and Chinese consumers."

## Mental health support available

LOOKING after your mental health is just as important as looking after your farm, your family, and yourself. It is understood that many farmers have concerns that seeking mental health support could put their firearms licence at risk. Getting support early does not mean you automatically lose your licence.

It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions following a distressing event.

Health professionals are here to work with you to help manage stress, anxiety, sleep difficulties, or low mood, and to put sensible plans in place if needed. There's no judgment, just support. You don't have to do this alone.

It is also important to look out for changes or signs that someone's mental health might be changing, as they may not notice themselves.

Yea Community Health can be contacted on 5736 0448, and you can self-refer or ask your GP for a referral.

Murrindindi Shire Council are offering that you can drop into one of their libraries or customer service centres for a quiet space, a conversation, or simply to be around others.

Council have mental health resources on their website, visit [murrindindi.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth](http://murrindindi.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth)

There is a state government Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 that can offer financial help, emergency accommodation, counselling and social help, and general support and information from 9am to 5pm.

Stress management techniques are available at [beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/what-is-stress#stress-management-techniques](http://beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/what-is-stress#stress-management-techniques)

### Other services available anytime

Rural Financial Counselling Service 1300 771 741.

National Centre for Farmers Health 5551 8533.

Lifeline 13 11 14 (24hrs).

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 (24hrs).

MensLine Australia 1300 78 99 78 (24hrs).

Suicide Line 1300 651 251 (24hrs).

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (24hrs).

First Nations - 13Yarn 13 92 76.

LGBTQI+ 1800 184 527 (3pm-midnight).

Family Violence 1800 Respect 1800 737 732 (24hrs).

Drug and Alcohol - Direct Line 1800 888 236 (24hrs).

## Yea Saleyards report from January 7

THE first cattle sale for the year at the Yea Saleyards took place on Wednesday, January 7, just prior to the outbreak of the Longwood bushfire. This was the Victorian Livestock and Property (VLP) Inaugural Weaner Sale.

The further sales scheduled for January at the Yea Saleyards were cancelled due to the emergency.

There were 3625 head of cattle yarded, fetching an average price of \$1663 per head with an average weight of 319

kilograms per head. Calculated, the average sale price was 521c/kg.

In the steer category, the top price per head was \$2360, with a top weight of 429.8 kilograms, equalling out to 549c/kg.

The top price per head for heifers was lower, at \$1900 and top weight of 373.6 kilograms, making for 509c/kg.

If nothing changes, the next upcoming sale at the Yea Saleyards will be a combined agents store sale on February 6. Keep an eye on the Yea Saleyards website for details, at [yeasaleyards.com.au](http://yeasaleyards.com.au)

YEA SALEYARDS STOCK REPORT 7 JANUARY 2026			
VLP Inaugural Weaner Sale	Total Yarding	Steers	Heifers
Number of head	3,625		
Average \$ per head	\$1,663		
Average weight per head	319 kg		
Top price per head		\$2,360	\$1,900
Top weight		429.8 kg	373.6 kg
Turnover	\$6.02 million		

## NFF statement on bushfires, flooding and cyclone disasters

by NFF President Hamish McIntyre

OUR thoughts are with everyone affected by the horrific bushfires, flooding and Cyclone Koji.

It's devastating that human and animal lives have been lost, along with vital infrastructure. The scale of destruction is huge, and it will take a lot of time, effort, and money to recover.

We thank the Federal Government for its swift response in announcing disaster assistance for impacted farmers in Victoria and Queensland.

It's great to see all levels of governments, along with emergency services, communities and charities rally together in this difficult time.

The quick response will undoubtedly help rural communities to recover.

There are multiple agencies offering assistance, and we encourage farmers to contact the Victorian Farmers' Federation's Disaster Relief Fund, AgForce, Queensland Farmers' Federation, their relevant industry group, and the NFF Disaster Relief website.

## Cracking down on illegal dumping

THE Victorian Government is taking action against illegal dumping in northern Victoria, cleaning up our parks and reserves and ensuring those who trash the environment are held to account.

Member for northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes announced applications are opening for the \$8.5 million Illegal Dumping Clean-up Rebate Program, providing extra financial support for councils and public land managers to clean up illegally dumped waste.

Illegal dumping is a big issue for public land managers across northern Victoria. They said they have listened to councils and land managers about the challenges and costs of dealing with illegal dumping.

The Illegal Dumping Clean-up Rebate Program will help public land managers in northern Victoria, such as councils and Crown land Committees of Management, to clean up priority waste. The program will cover up to 50 per cent of the clean-up costs in situations where all avenues to trace the perpetrator and recover costs have been exhausted or are not feasible.

This rebate program will be facilitated by DEECA and is part of the Government's \$21.5 million crackdown on illegal dumping.

To catch more people flouting the law and hold them to account, \$13 million will help the Illegal Dumping Taskforce ramp up surveillance, enforcement and clean-up efforts across Victoria.

The taskforce will be led by the EPA, who will work with Conservation Regulator and undertake enforcement activities using expanded intelligence and monitoring to detect and respond to waste crimes in key locations.

All Victorians have a part to play in preventing waste dumping. To report illegal dumping contact the EPA on 1300 372 842.

To find out more about the Illegal Dumping Clean-up Rebate Program, visit [environment.vic.gov.au/grants/illegal-dumping-clean-up-rebate](http://environment.vic.gov.au/grants/illegal-dumping-clean-up-rebate)

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes said, "We are helping keep Northern Victoria clean, healthy and safe."

## Free entry to Funfields

VOLUNTEERS in Victoria have again sacrificed their summer break to help battle catastrophic bushfires across the state and Funfields Themepark is saying thank you to members of the CFA who stepped up when it mattered most.

For the remainder of January, CFA members are being offered a complimentary day at Funfields, giving firefighters the chance to switch off, cool down and relax for a one-day holiday.

While Whittlesea was not impacted by the fires, Funfields says the initiative is about recognising the extraordinary efforts of CFA volunteers across Victoria who have spent weeks protecting lives, homes and communities under extreme conditions.

CFA members simply need to present proof of membership on arrival, such as a CFA ID card, brigade letter or email, or a screenshot of their CFA member account or roster, to receive free entry.

Their work isn't over yet, but Funfields hopes the gesture provides a small but meaningful way to acknowledge the sacrifice and resilience shown by CFA volunteers during one of the most challenging fire seasons in recent years.

"Our CFA volunteers give so much of themselves to protect others," Flynn Simsek, Funfields GM of Operations, said.

"This is our way of saying thank you and offering a chance to relax and recharge after an incredibly tough period."

THE ALEXANDRA • EILDON • MARYSVILLE

# Standard Sport

SPORTS EDITORIAL - sports@alexandranewspapers.com.au

ISSN 2200-6478



## Merton cricketers defeat Rutherglen at Benalla

MERTON cricketers hosted Rutherglen at Benalla due to the restrictions on travel due to the fires. It is very sad that Merton members and ex players Jerrimy Morrison and Alex Moore have been impacted with the loss of their homes and the fires have impacted many in the Merton area.

After the long Christmas break and only one training session before the match Merton batting first looked out of touch with a

massive batting collapse with Luke Benton 20 showing some top order runs with the score at one point being 5/41. Some resistance saw the score crawl to 9/73 with Rutherglen's Matt Lister 4/23 a handful for the Merton side.

An inspiring last wicket partnership of 45 runs between youngsters William Benton 24 not out and Henry Berriman 21 not out saw a batting master class and really took their opportunity batting out the required 36 overs

and taking the score to a more respectable 9/118 and giving their side something to bowl at.

Merton definitely looked sharp in the field with the opening bowlers really bending their backs and getting the rewards. Luke Berriman 4/27 and Jai Lerch-McKinnon 3/22 did a great job smashing the Rutherglen top order with Tom Ford 15 the only batsmen to show any resistance, Henry Berriman 2/3 and Harry

Craddock one wicket finished the job for the Merton side bowling Rutherglen out in the 22nd over for 65.

Merton are now second on the Wangaratta District Cricket Association b grade ladder with the challenges continuing in two weeks when Merton host Yarrawonga at the Merton Cricket Ground (MCG). The Merton boys are wishing a speedy recovery for club President Burnie Cummins after a stint in hospital.



Jai Lerch-McKinnon bowling for Merton. -S

### Alexandra Golf Club report

by Dave Silverman

IT seems almost wrong to talk about golf at a time when so much of our area has been so badly affected by fire, when so many people, including some of our own members, have lost everything, and it is surely due to the incredible efforts of the huge group of men and women who put themselves in harms way to save the lives and property of others, that things weren't a whole lot worse. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you, each and every one.

The reserve on which the Alex golf course sits was largely unaffected, again, thanks to the selfless crews who managed to limit the damage to a patch of scrub in the north-east corner of the property. A big pat on the back also needs to go to the small, but dedicated, group of our ladies who spent their Wednesday morning cleaning up the sticks and leaves from around the clubhouse area.

Competition resumed on Saturday morning with a Stableford round, sponsored by the Corner Hotel. The weather was fine and warm, but quite windy, which may have a fair impact on the scores. John Greatorex was the winner with 38 points, two clear of Michael Bossonnet, Shane McGorlick and Dave Silverman, who filled second to fourth places. Brad Kidd was fifth with 35.

Brad also won the meat raffle, while of the five nearest the pins available, only three were claimed. Michael took 12, and Gretto snared both seven and 18.

### Yea Racing fundraiser

YEA Racing acknowledges the impact of the recent bushfires on our community and extends its support to those affected. They would also like to sincerely thank the incredible emergency services personnel, especially the CFA, for their tireless efforts in fighting these fires and protecting the region.

They are grateful to share that the racecourse was fortunate to avoid damage, and they will be proceeding with the Nutrien Ag Solutions Yea Cup on Saturday, January 24.

This event will include fundraising to support our community and those impacted by the fires, and they invite everyone to come along with family and friends to help give back to those in need.

The day will feature free entry for under 16s, along with free Kelly Sports activities, pony rides, and face painting, making it a great family day out.

Tickets can be booked online or purchased at the gate. They look forward to seeing you all at the Picnic Races as we come together in support of the community.

### Eildon Golf Club back for a new year

by Puttomatic

WELCOME back to the Eildon Golf Club match report.

Firstly on behalf of the Eildon Golf Club the author would like to pass on support and best wishes to all who have suffered losses through the recent bushfire tragedies, and hope you are all safe and getting the support you need.

Last week Eildon golfers played a par round and had 13 players braving the strong winds which made the course even more of a challenge. Winner last week was Dale Lunt with a great plus three result, coming in second Colin Long with plus one. Ball run winners last week a visitor from Leongatha Patrick Bowd zero, Leigh Munro minus one, Rod Taylor minus one and Mark Mackwell minus one.

Nearest the pin winners last week, on the third Grant Walters, fifth Rod Taylor, 11th Ken Coller, 12th and 14th Mark Mackwell. There were two winners on the birdie holes on the eighth Phil Dally and on the 15th Leigh Munro, both earning a round of drinks for their groups and the super six winner last week was Ian Lakeland. Ian also took out the entry and swindle draws.

Next week is a stroke round. It is also the club's January medal round and the fourth round of the summer cup. With the threat of more hot weather to come keep an eye on your text messages for course updates and please stay safe.