



CRC community survey yields valuable results

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THE Alpine Community Recovery Committee (CRC) has compiled the results of its recent community survey, identifying key needs and next steps to support local communities recovering from last summer's bushfires and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee is made up of representatives from across the Alpine Shire and Alpine Resorts, to help give a voice to the broad views and recovery goals of local communities.

CRC Chair Fiona Nicholls said 327 people completed the survey, which was available online and in hard copy from September to mid-November.

"Something that stood out straight away is the level of care and concern people have for each other in our community," she said.

"People also expressed a keen enthusiasm for gathering and connection.

"For some, this was about debriefing and checking in with each other now restrictions have lifted and for others, this is seen as being essential for community strengthening and building resilience."

The results showed that 4 in 10 people impacted by the 2019-2020 bushfires are progressing well. Concerningly, just under 4 in 10 people impacted are making only some to no progress in recovery.

Ms Nicholls said it is important to recognise that in all localities across our region, there are people not progressing well, and that their recovery has been enormously impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

"We had 227 people - or 70% of our survey respondents - explain to us how COVID-19 restrictions affected their bushfire recovery - we heard a lot of stress, a lot of strain, a lot of emotion, in their responses," she said.

"We heard about the impact on mental health, people lamenting the loss of being able to gather and debrief and support one another to recover from the fires.

"We heard about the impact on people's lives - not being able to travel, having to homeschool, all these new issues we faced under restrictions, impacting people's recovery - the double whammy that so many people spoke about.

"And, we also heard about gratitude - people acknowledging that despite the hardships, they were grateful to be safe and well."

Ms Nicholls said the survey also asked people what they and their communities need to better prepare for future bushfires.

“We heard so many practical, innovative and compassionate responses,” she said.

“People want accurate information and advice about property preparation and evacuation points, and they want to raise the overall community level of education and awareness, so we are better able as communities to prepare and respond to future events.

“Many people talked about building community resilience and working together to support vulnerable people in our communities and emphasised their need for clear information, for reliable communication infrastructure and for clarity in evacuation procedures.

“We heard great ideas like having an annual weekend where communities can help those who need it, to prepare their properties ahead of bushfire season.”

The survey results will inform the development of a Community Recovery Plan.

“We greatly appreciate and have heard your feedback - we are working on practical actions to address the issues raised as soon as possible,” Ms Nicholls said.

Learn more about the results at www.alpineshire.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-committee.

For information about fire preparation visit <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about/plan-and-prepare>.

There is support available to help people in their bushfire recovery, including mental health support, agriculture and farming grants and advice.

Contact Shelley at the Alpine Recovery Hub on alpinehub@brv.vic.gov.au to find out more about the type of recovery support that is available.

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For further information, contact Alpine Shire Council Communications Officer Ebony Buckley
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