



Image | Brendan Holland

Alpine Community Recovery Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2020

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Alpine Community Recovery Newsletter, a joint initiative by Alpine Shire Council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria.

LER Program

The \$68.6 million Local Economic Recovery (LER) program is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments and will fund local projects vital for community recovery, support economic stimulus projects, and boost industry and jobs across bushfire-affected regions. The following projects in the Alpine region have received funding from the LER program:

- \$120,000 to build a 19.5 metre pedestrian bridge joining Harrietville with the east branch of the Ovens, to support tourism and mobility.
- \$40,000 to create murals in Mount Beauty to reflect community pride and create a significant new point of interest for tourists travelling through the town.

Round one of the community projects stream funded under the LER program have now closed and we look forward to hearing what other projects have been funded from this first tranche of funding. Communities can look forward to subsequent rounds opening in March and July, 2021, so they don't miss out. Visit www.br.vic.gov.au for more information.

POEL Scheme

The Victorian Government is undergrounding bare-wire powerlines across bushfire-affected properties in the Alpine Shire. Apply for the Private Overhead Electric Line (POEL) Scheme, open now until 31 December 2020. The Scheme contributes to building community resilience and community safety, with economic benefits for local economies realised through the creation of local jobs.

Applications can be made by visiting <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/electricity/powerline-replacement> or calling the POEL Scheme Project Team on 03 9918 7315.

Support Is Available

Mental health support is available from a number of services in the time that you and those around you need it most. Connect with these services through the Alpine Recovery Hub by calling 0429 529 700 or by emailing alpinehub@brv.vic.gov.au.

Introducing Your RSO

Hayley Payne is your local Recovery Support Officer (RSO), working within the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA). Hayley is a long term local to the Alpine area and volunteered at the Wangaratta and Myrtleford Relief Centres during the bushfires. Hayley is here to help people navigate and understand the system, and provide advice and assistance on finding the bushfire recovery support options right for their situation. As an RSO, she is here to listen and support, as well as to gain a better understanding of what Alpine communities need. Connect with Hayley by emailing liaison@bushfirerecovery.gov.au.

Financial Counselling

Financial counsellors are qualified professionals in your local area who provide information, advocacy and support for people experiencing financial difficulty. The service is free, independent, non-judgmental and confidential. Financial counselling is available for anyone affected by the bushfires. Your financial counsellor can help you to:

- Understand your government income and other entitlements
- Access relief for utility bills, and other payments
- Negotiate with your bank on debt issues
- Identify if your insurance outcome is fair and appropriate

A financial counsellor will provide you with options and can advocate on your behalf. Visit www.br.vic.gov.au to see how to access free counselling services in your area.

ALPINE CHAT

Alpine Community Recovery Committee News
Edition 2 | November 2020



ABOUT US

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

GET IN TOUCH

Email info@alpinecrc.org.au

WHO WE ARE

Fiona Nicholls | Chair
Myrtleford and Surrounds

Steve Belli | Deputy Chair
Mount Hotham

Bruce Hore
Bright and Surrounds

Kellie Gray
Bright and Surrounds

Fiona Laird
Harrietville and Surrounds

Sally McDonald
Myrtleford and Surrounds

Malcolm McPherson
Dinner Plain

Dani Sheean
Falls Creek

Barbara Talbot
Kiewa Valley and Surrounds

Lachlan Thomas
Harrietville and Surrounds

Nicholas Wright
Kiewa Valley and Surrounds

WHAT'S NEW

- Mark Hubbard has started his new adventure beyond the Alpine Shire, and the Alpine CRC thank him for his assistance in establishing the foundations of this committee. The Alpine CRC, in conjunction with Council and BRV, are now seeking expressions of interest for a CRC representative from Dinner Plain, with expressions of interest closing at 7pm on Monday, 7 December. Find out more by visiting <https://www.alpineshire.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-committee>.
- If you're applying for a grant that requires you to demonstrate that your project is supported by the community, Alpine CRC have put together a proforma to assist you with this step. It can be found by contacting info@alpinecrc.org.au or by visiting <https://www.alpineshire.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-committee>.
- Alpine Shire residents recently had the opportunity to dispose of their green waste for no cost. Alpine CRC supports these free green waste disposals, as this is integral for bushfire preparedness to ensure that your property is clear of potential threats.

CRC SURVEY

The CRC undertook a six-week consultation survey, which has now closed. We were pleased to receive over 320 responses and we thank the community for their time and input. We are now in the process of analysing the results.

A majority of participants indicated that they are making progress towards recovery. However, 12% indicated that they are not. We would like to encourage anyone who is looking for more support on their personal path to recovery to contact the BRV Hub by calling 0429 529 700 or emailing alpinehub@brv.vic.gov.au. We also heard how COVID-19 restrictions had impacted people's ability to recover, including the challenges of not being able to resume a normal life after the bushfires, and the devastating impact on businesses and sole traders. However, we also had a number of comments on how the COVID-19 restrictions had no impact or had been a positive.

Early indication shows that environmental protection and management is the highest priority area for future bushfire preparedness, followed by improved internet and telecommunications. We hope to use this understanding of community priority to target communications with the appropriate authorities. Respondents also raised a number of issues and ideas towards improving community preparedness for bushfires from more pre-season fire briefings, and practical information, such as what trees can be planted to reduce risk, understanding fire behaviour at a local level, individuals' responsibilities for clean-up, green waste pickup, and information on evacuation procedures. Some of this information is already available, so we will look to where we can raise awareness and access in a targeted way.

We now look forward to being able to review the data at a more granular level and pull out the differences and the similarities between the different regions. This will enable us to better identify and target opportunities to support the development of suitable programmes. We will also be using this information to inform a more structured recovery plan for the region; one that looks beyond preparedness for the next bushfire season, to one that looks to build long term resilience for economic, social, and environmental pillars in our communities.