

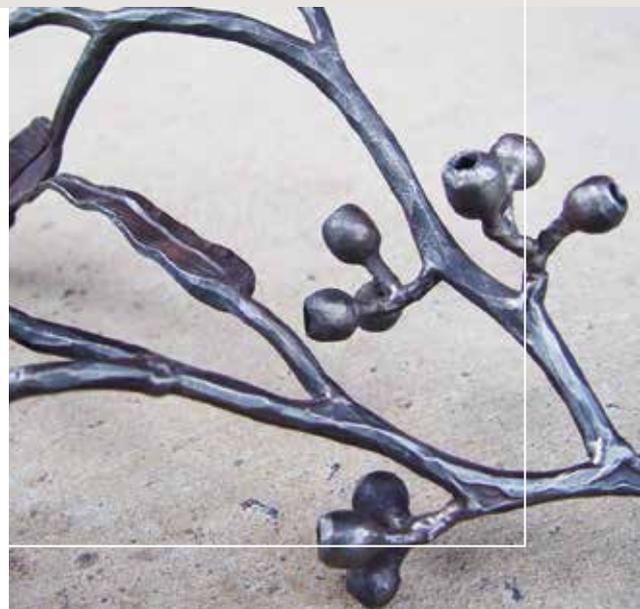


VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE RECOVERY FOUR YEAR UPDATE

February 2013



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MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY PREMIER



Four years on from the devastation of the 2009 Victorian bushfires, both individuals and communities have made significant progress on the road to recovery.

A survey conducted in mid-2012 showed that 87 per cent of the almost 1600 households that lost their primary place of residence have rebuilt, purchased a new property or begun the process of rebuilding. This reflects an enormous effort by those who lost so much in the fires.

The Bushfire Buy-Back Scheme was successfully implemented in 2012 and provided an alternative to rebuilding for many in areas most at risk of bushfires. In excess of 100 households have opted to sell their land to the State Government through the Scheme, thereby providing another avenue to assist with their recovery.

We know that physical rebuilding is just one component of the recovery process. The rebuilding of, or in some cases new connections between communities is also critically important. Through working together, much has been achieved in community recovery over the past 12 months. Memorials have been unveiled to remember those lost in the tragedy, new or rebuilt facilities and public spaces have been opened to the community, and countless groups of locals have simply come together to talk or share a passion such as art or gardening.

Towns that were physically impacted by the fires have also begun to thrive again. Businesses have reopened and tourists have returned to places like Marysville. The announcement of the Vibe Marysville Hotel and Conference Centre promises further opportunities.

All of these achievements have played a critical role in the ongoing recovery of both individuals and communities affected by the bushfires.

Recognising that recovery is a long process that is experienced in a variety of ways, the government remains committed to supporting individuals and communities, as well as doing everything possible to manage the future risk of fires. The government has committed to implementing all 67 recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. On 31 July 2012, the Final Report of the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor was submitted to Parliament. It stated that "Victoria is now substantially better prepared on a regular basis to respond to bushfire risk than at the time of Black Saturday." The extension of the role of the Implementation Monitor for a further two years illustrates the government's commitment to making sure the task is completed.

This update provides a snapshot of the substantial recovery and rebuilding efforts of individuals and communities in 2012. The government will continue to work with bushfire-affected communities throughout 2013 to ensure that progress continues to be made.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Ryan'.

Peter Ryan
Deputy Premier
Minister for Bushfire Response

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



Individuals and communities affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires have shown remarkable resilience in their ability to recover. Homes have been rebuilt, public infrastructure has been reopened, and communities have been rejuvenated.

Personal journeys of recovery have also been remarkable, but emotional recovery can take time. Recognising that this is a complex and individual process, the government is working with a variety of stakeholders, including local

service providers, community groups and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (VBAF), to ensure that individuals and communities have the support they need.

Red Cross Disaster Recovery and Outreach Program

In 2012, Australian Red Cross volunteers visited 18 fire-affected communities to provide recovery information, emotional support, and refer people on to other services as needed.

The aim of the program was to empower and enable people affected by the 2009 fires to address their own individual needs. This has been achieved by connecting people with local community and support services such as counselling support, practical assistance, financial advice, fire preparedness planning and business support.

In 2012:

Number of households visited	Approx. 800
Number of interviews conducted	340
Number of referrals made	23

Into the Light 2012

Creative arts activities and events have been a keystone of the bushfire recovery effort in Whittlesea and surrounding fire-affected communities.

Into the Light 2012 was a community event staged at the Whittlesea Showgrounds on Saturday 1 September to commemorate the 2009 fires and assist in the recovery of the local community. It involved a theatrical performance which celebrated walking from the darkness of winter into the light of spring.



Some of the highlights of the show included a magical lantern parade that engaged directly with audience members, while local musicians played and a Koori Youth choir sang. A local children's art group also performed a shadow puppet play on a 25 metre long screen.

Around 1300 people participated in the parade, watched by an audience of 200 community members. Over 600 lanterns were made by school children working in collaboration with local artists, who participated in workshops with 11 primary schools throughout fire-affected communities.

In parallel, community members made personalised lanterns during weekend workshops with the local artists, who met regularly in the months before the show to develop a performance that reflected the unfolding story of their community's recovery.

The project was a community driven, rich and creative process that crossed municipal boundaries and formed partnerships with programs from neighbouring councils, as well as local arts, educational and community organisations.

Service and Community Collaboration Networks

Several Service and Community Collaboration Networks have been established to bring together representatives from service delivery agencies, community groups and government departments at local and state government level. These networks emerged as Community Service Hubs progressively wound down their operations.

In 2012, the networks were a critical forum for monitoring service delivery and emerging recovery issues, particularly those that require a coordinated response. They also provided a point of entry for new recovery-related service agencies and workers to establish referral pathways and community contacts.

These networks continue to operate in the Kinglake Ranges, Whittlesea, Yarra Ranges and Nillumbik Shires.

Networks in Bendigo, Gippsland and Marysville ceased regular meetings in mid-to-late-2012 but continue to operate informally to share information, provide referrals and community group support.

The remaining networks will continue to meet in 2013, with a focus on identifying and connecting those who still require support into mainstream services.

Bushfire Communities Support Program

The Bushfire Communities Support Program (BCSP) provided Community Support Workers, a Flexible Outreach Service and a dedicated Helpline from March 2011 until 30 June 2012 (with the Helpline continuing until 30 September 2012).

Demand for the services provided by the BCSP reduced over time, and all clients requiring further assistance at the time of closure were referred to other appropriate services.

Since October 2012, callers to the Helpline have been referred to the Fire Recovery Unit.

To 30 September 2012:

Number of calls to Helpline	918
Number of clients receiving case work support	546
Number of community development activities delivered	162

Flashmob Fridays



The Macaroni Mob preparing for their Flashmob performance

A flashmob is a group of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform an unusual act for a brief time, and then quickly disperse.

Flashmob Fridays involved a group of up to 15 young people from Christmas Hills, St Andrews, Cottles Bridge, Strathewen, Eltham and Montmorency coming together every Friday during school holidays to put together and perform a flashmob.

Part of the Nillumbik Shire Council Masterplan for improving health and wellbeing through arts activities, this approach assisted the recovery of

bushfire-affected young people by creating an environment where they could be creative, experiment with bold ideas in a safe environment, and complete a project all in one day.

A particular highlight was the Macaroni Mob's performance amongst surprised shoppers at an Eltham supermarket. Dancing to the macarena in a conga line with shopping trolleys, the participants wore handmade capes to honour Cape April, an initiative to promote awareness of depression in young people.

In partnership with Vic Health, the Regional Arts Fund and with the assistance of Nillumbik Youth, the flashmobs got participants out in the community in a positive and fun manner, and lasting new friendships were formed.

Support for the Bereaved

A number of support services, funded by VBAF, continued to assist and connect those bereaved as a result of the bushfires.

The Bushfire Bereaved Community Advisory Group (BBCAG) was established in late 2009, to provide a supportive environment and advocacy channel for the bereaved. Throughout 2012 the group met regularly, providing advice to government and commencing a legacy document to assist bereaved individuals and communities affected by future disasters. BBCAG is supported through VBAF until June 2013.

EACH Social and Community Health provided support to BBCAG as well as a range of support services to the broader bereaved community, including a regular newsletter (*Staying in Touch*), community activities and forums. These activities will continue in 2013.

The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB) provided specialist bereavement counselling to individuals and families, and continued to co-ordinate support groups for adults and children during 2012.

Third Anniversary Remembrance Event

On 5 February 2012, a remembrance event was held at the Victorian Arts Centre to provide a central place for Victorians to come together and mark the third anniversary of the bushfires.

Around 150 people attended the event, which was hosted by retired Victoria Police Senior Chaplain, Reverend Jim Pilmer PSM.

Moving musical performances were provided by individuals from bushfire-affected communities.



Bushfire Memorials

Several memorials to commemorate the 2009 bushfires were unveiled in fire-affected communities in 2012.

The Victorian Government previously provided \$2.5 million to bushfire-affected councils via the Community Recovery Fund, to assist with the development of community memorials. This funding enabled councils to undertake extensive community consultation and develop processes and timelines that suited the needs of their communities.

Of the 19 councils that received funding, 11 memorials were unveiled by the end of 2012, with the remaining eight expected to be completed in 2013.

Callignee Memorial Wall

The Callignee Memorial Wall was developed by members of the Callignee community over a 12 month period.

Situated a short walk from the new Callignee Hall, the wall is a rendered, straw bale construction covered in clay tiles painted by local primary school students.

The tiles, placed on the wall as a tribute to those who lost their lives in the bushfires, were glazed and fired locally and are a colourful expression of the community's thoughts and feelings.

A sculpture of Janus, the God of beginnings and endings, greets visitors at the head of the pathway leading to the memorial site. The pathway was constructed by local community members.

A log seat nestled amongst a thicket of gum trees in front of the wall invites visitors to sit and reflect.

The project was supported by the Community Recovery Fund, Latrobe City Council and the Callignee community.



VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE APPEAL FUND (VBAF) MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM RECOVERY PACKAGE

In 2012, VBAF delivered its \$21 million package to support the medium and long-term recovery of individuals and communities affected by the bushfires.

Extensive consultation with stakeholders and community members, including the establishment of a Community Advisory Committee (CAC), led to the identification of the key priorities for medium to long-term recovery and the delivery of the following services and projects.

Community Projects and Foundations

A total of 72 medium to long-term community projects were funded by VBAF and will be delivered over the next 18 months. These include health and wellbeing projects, arts projects, landcare projects, as well as community support officers.

A small number of infrastructure projects, including the Christmas Hills Hall and the Horsham Golf Clubhouse, have also been funded through this program. These projects commenced construction in 2012 and will reach completion in 2013 and 2014.

Rebuilding of the Horsham Golf Club began in 2012



In addition, funding of between \$750,000 and \$1 million was provided towards Community Foundations in Alpine and Indigo Shires, the Kinglake Ranges, Marysville and Mitchell Shire.

These independent, locally-run organisations are required to distribute the funding according to VBAF requirements. They have an extended period of time to deliver on this commitment and the capacity to raise additional funding via other donations.

Yarra Glen and District Men's Shed – Shed on Wheels



In the months after Black Saturday, concerns emerged about the effects of the bushfires on men's physical and mental health. The idea of bringing men together to share their passion for building, fixing and tinkering in a local Men's Shed took root in late 2010. A dedicated band of local volunteers then formed a committee to secure funding and finalise a location and design for the shed.

So keen were the Men's Shed group to get started that they decided to go mobile until their dream 220 square metre shed could be realised. They launched their Shed on Wheels in April 2012 on the site of their future shed. The large box trailer was donated by the Portland Baptist Church and arrived filled with equipment. With additional donations from Bunnings and a generous benefactor, the trailer was ready to go to work once it was painted and signed with support from the Healesville Bendigo Community Bank.

The Shed on Wheels has been kept mobile throughout 2012 thanks to groups of men volunteering their skills and labour on projects, including landscaping at the Healesville Hospital, construction of storage space for the RSL at the Yarra Glen Memorial Hall and garden maintenance for people in need.

The permanent Men's Shed is due to begin construction in early to mid 2013 with funding support from the VBAF medium to long-term recovery package.

Psychological Support Services

In addition to community projects, VBAF supported several statewide services for bushfire-affected people. Targeted psychological support services aimed at those most in need were identified as the highest priority for medium to long term recovery.

The \$3.5 million package of services available statewide includes specialist counselling and trauma services for adults, young people and children; an outreach service for adults with complex or multiple needs; and an online counselling service for children and young people up to the age of 26 years.

These targeted services will continue to operate throughout 2013.

Community On-Ground Assistance Program (COGA)

Community consultation in 2012 indicated an ongoing need for practical assistance to address newly emerging on-ground issues in the redevelopment of bushfire-affected properties. This led VBAF to provide \$2.9 million to expand the Kinglake-based COGA program across the State.

The expanded service includes:

- general property clean-up and debris removal;
- dangerous tree removal and timber cutting;
- house and/or structural repairs; and
- environmental repairs.

Grants for Resilience & Wellness (GROW)

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) has been commissioned to run a \$2.9 million small grants program to provide ongoing support to bushfire-affected communities well into the future.

FRRR opened the GROW program in October 2012. It provides small grants for localised programs and projects such as health and wellbeing activities, respite and retreats, art exhibitions and workshops and landcare initiatives.

Support for the Bereaved and Displaced

In 2012, VBAF allocated \$500,000 to support those bereaved by the 2009 bushfires and \$100,000 to establish a website aimed at re-connecting people displaced and dispersed from their communities in the aftermath of the fires.

Details of these initiatives will be developed in 2013.

At January 2013:

Number of Medium to Long term Community Projects	72
Number of Community Foundations	5
Number of people accessing counselling	293
Number of households assisted by COGA	44

Community On Ground Assistance

COGA, now a statewide CatholicCare program, grew out of two initiatives responding to emerging community needs in the aftermath of the bushfires. A small group of residents from the Kinglake Ranges who volunteered to assist each other with property clean-up joined forces with a project that provided qualified trades people to carry out tasks, ranging from tree felling to carpentry and rebuilding tasks.

With valuable equipment supplied by a range of community service organisations and funding from VBAF, COGA was able to scale up its Property Recovery and Trades Assistance programs and formalise a close working relationship with the Kinglake Ranges Volunteer Resource Centre. The volunteer aspect of the program facilitates the goodwill of corporate and community volunteers to assist with the recovery effort.

COGA's focus is on providing practical support, empowering people to engage in the tasks required to resettle in their homes and communities. At times, small scale interventions such as clearing regrowth or removing a dangerous tree are enough to inspire people to get started, or persevere in their rebuilding process. Many participants in the program report being overwhelmed by the transformations the volunteer groups can achieve on their properties, completing jobs that would take them months in just a few hours.



COGA volunteers stacking firewood at a fire-affected property

RECONSTRUCTION



Rebuilding of homes continued in 2012 with support from the Rebuilding Advisory Service

The rebuilding of homes destroyed by the fires continued throughout 2012, with the most comprehensive housing survey conducted to date showing that the vast majority of people have settled into permanent accommodation.

Additional sources of assistance gave home owners new options to consider, including the VBAF Further Housing Assistance Gift and the Bushfire Buy-Back Scheme, while the Rebuilding Advisory Service continued to provide practical advice, information and support.

At the same time, some significant community infrastructure projects were completed, providing much-needed public space for recovering communities.

INDIVIDUAL REBUILDING

Fire Recovery Housing Survey

In the first half of 2012, the Fire Recovery Unit conducted a housing survey of the 1569 households that lost their owner-occupied principal place of residence in the 2009 bushfires.

The survey utilised existing data from a range of available sources, in addition to a telephone and postal survey targeting over 750 households.

The current housing status of the majority of households was collected, including information on housing arrangements, rebuilding progress and future intentions. At the same time, respondents were provided with information and referrals to available support services.

Key findings of the survey include:

- 87% of households have rebuilt, purchased a new property, or begun the process of rebuilding;
- 81% of households are now in permanent accommodation, having either rebuilt, purchased a new property, or relocated into alternative housing arrangements;
- 19% of households remain in temporary accommodation, either on their fire-affected property or offsite; and
- 72% of households in temporary accommodation are either in the process of rebuilding or intending to rebuild.

Rebuilding Advisory Service

In 2012, the Rebuilding Advisory Service continued to provide practical advice to households working through the often complex rebuilding process.

Over the past twelve months, the advisers worked closely with VBAF to support the implementation of the Further Housing Assistance Gift.

Since 2009:

Number of clients	1,178
Number of consultations	9,467

VBAF Further Housing Assistance Gift

VBAF's Further Housing Assistance Gift was aimed at supporting home-owners who lost their principal place of residence in the fires to move from temporary accommodation to permanent housing solutions. With the support of a network of Housing Associations and the Rebuilding Advisory Service, over 250 households are now being assisted step-by-step through the rehousing process. Applicants who develop housing plans tailored to their specific needs are eligible to receive up to \$50,000. They also have access to a range of mainstream support services, including financial or other counselling.

Number of housing plans completed	97
Number of households receiving assistance	Approx. 250

Bushfire Buy-Back Scheme

The Bushfire Buy-Back Scheme provided eligible homeowners who lost their principal place of residence in the fires with an alternative to rebuilding. Over 100 homeowners have chosen to sell their property to the State Government through the Scheme, which was open for applications between March and May 2012.

The future use of land acquired through the Scheme is now being determined by the Bushfire Land Acquisition Panel. Land may be retained as state or national park, or resold to create an additional fire buffer, grazing land or garden space for existing neighbours. Any land resold cannot be used for future residential development.

Number of landowners proceeding to settlement	115
Number of properties settled	100

The rebuilt Strathewen Public Hall, opened August 2012



COMMUNITY REBUILDING

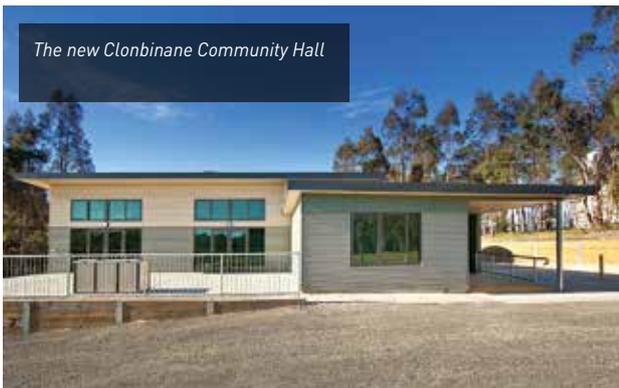
Community Facilities

Community facilities, including those funded through VBAF's \$43 million Community Projects Initiative, continued to be completed and opened for community use throughout 2012.

Recognising the important role of community in recovery, government and VBAF funding was allocated to provide bushfire-affected communities with infrastructure and programs to enhance community recovery.

Community facilities opened in 2012 included Castella Central Park, Clonbinane Hall, Glenburn Hall and Community Centre, Strathewen Public Hall, Steels Creek Walking Track, Yarra Glen Memorial Hall and Yarram Memorial Park and Skate Park.

The new Clonbinane Community Hall



Castella Central Park



Steve Meacher, Tabitha Firth, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Development Damian Drum, Lisa Carew, Murrindindi Shire Mayor Cr John Walsh at the opening of the redeveloped Castella Central Park

Redevelopment of the Castella Central Park was a high priority for the local community following the devastation of the bushfires.

The aim was to create a public space that caters for the diverse recreational activities enjoyed by local communities. With funding from the VBAF Community Projects Initiative and a contribution from Sustainability Victoria, the works involved the restoration of burnt land, construction of walking, cycling and horse tracks, horse yards and float parking, as well as picnic tables, barbeques and other public amenities.

Now completed, these facilities provide an important link between the surrounding communities of Toolangi, Castella, Dixons Creek, Glenburn and Kinglake.

LOCAL ECONOMIES

Artist's impression of the Marysville Hotel and Conference Centre



The rejuvenation of local economies is a critical component of recovery. In 2012, key initiatives continued to be delivered and significant milestones, including the announcement of the Vibe Hotel and Conference Centre in Marysville, were achieved.

Marysville Hotel and Conference Centre

On 23 October 2012, the Deputy Premier announced that Melbourne Civic City Property, in partnership with Toga Pty Ltd and Metier3 Architects, had been selected to develop and operate the new Vibe Hotel and Conference Centre in Marysville.

Representing a significant milestone in the continuing renewal of the Marysville area, the Hotel and Conference Centre will include 100 guest rooms, conferencing facilities for 300 people, a cafe/restaurant, a public bar, a day spa and associated recreational facilities for hotel guests.

Construction of the Vibe Hotel and Conference Centre is scheduled to commence in the first half of 2013 and will create 85 new full time jobs over the construction phase. The facility will support up to 60 full time jobs in the community within five years of completion.

The announcement follows a comprehensive bid process that included an expression of interest stage conducted in 2011 to shortlist preferred operators, and a request for proposal stage conducted with the shortlisted operators during 2012.

Marysville and Triangle Economic Recovery

In July 2011, two key initiatives were launched to support the economic recovery of Marysville and surrounding communities; the Economic Recovery Package and the Tourism and Events Package.

A key component of the Economic Recovery Package is an interest rate subsidy to support new business investment in the Marysville area, including:

- tourism accommodation;
- new rental accommodation;
- retail and professional services premises;
- restaurants and food premises; and
- light industry.

Eight projects were submitted for support in 2012. The Marysville and surrounds interest rate subsidies are open for applications until 30 June 2013.

In 2012, the Tourism and Events Package supported 20 local events, including the Marysville Sparkling Wine Festival and the Yea Autumn Festival. Further events are already scheduled for 2013. The Tourism and Events Package also assisted in the re-establishment of the Marysville Visitor Information Centre as a seven day a week, 9am to 5pm service.

Grand Strzelecki Track

The Grand Strzelecki Track, affectionately known as the "GST", is a significant tourist attraction that was created out of the efforts of local communities in Balook and Jeeralang. Both communities suffered extensive economic damage as a result of the Black Saturday fires.

Supported by Hancock Victoria Plantations, Regional Development Victoria, Wellington Shire Council, Latrobe City Council, Parks Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Bendigo Bank, the Grand Strzelecki Track is a 110 km network of trails connecting Morwell National Park, Mount Tassie, the Tarra Valley, Tarra Bulga National Park and Balook. The track consists of a series of looped walks through lush green valleys, spectacular mountain ash stands, creek crossings and exquisite scenery.

The project is a result of local collaboration, which involved the Committee of Management rallying local groups around the project along with strong support from both Wellington Shire and Latrobe City Councils.

The now completed project is on track to realise its strategic objectives of attracting tourism, encouraging visitors, improving the liveability of the region and connecting the small communities along the track.

The project has won widespread acclaim, recently winning the 2012 Parks and Leisure Australia Award of Excellence in recognition of its support for community recovery and capacity building.



Russell Northe MP, Member for Morwell, opens the Latrobe City section of the Grand Strzelecki Track at Billy's Creek in May 2012

ENVIRONMENT



The natural environment has shown enormous resilience since the fires and the majority of on-ground recovery projects have been completed. Community-led environmental projects are now bringing people together with a focus on good management and prevention of future damage.

Kinglake National Park

Approximately 96% of the Kinglake National Park was burnt in the 2009 bushfires, including most visitor facilities.

Rehabilitation work is almost complete, with most visitor sites and an extensive network of tracks reopened in 2012, including the iconic Masons Falls. The recovery works at Masons Falls included rebuilding walking tracks and a lookout platform to view the cascading falls, as well as extensive picnic and barbeque facilities.

Activities that both locals and visitors can enjoy throughout the Kinglake National Park include bushwalking, picnics, camping, horse-riding and cycling.

In addition to the new visitor facilities, the park has succeeded in protecting 600 native plant species, over 40 native mammal species, and 90 native bird species. Post-fire studies are continuing and Parks Victoria has identified more rare and threatened plant species.

Community-led Environmental Recovery

The health and wellbeing of many individuals and communities is closely linked to the natural environment. Community-led environmental recovery projects have therefore responded to both environmental and community needs.

The Redesdale Fire Land Management Sub-Committee launched its Redesdale Biolinks Project Plan in February 2012. The plan has guided the active involvement of over sixty property owners between Redesdale and Sidonia, in the re-establishment of critical habitat linkages across the fire-affected landscape. A significant amount of on-ground work is due to begin in 2013, with new Commonwealth funding recently received.

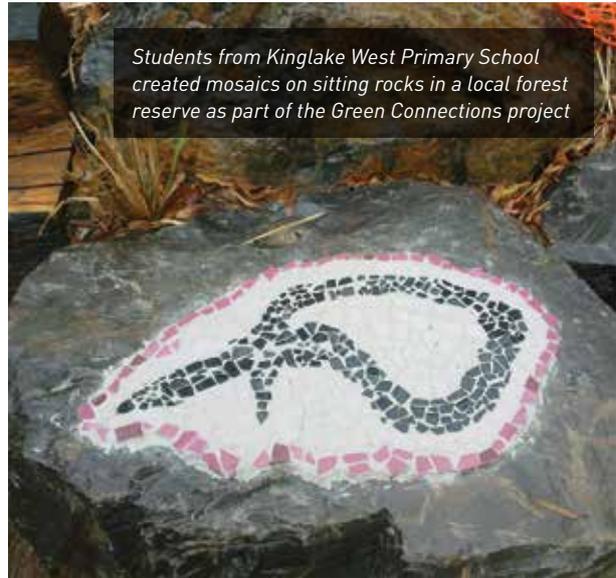
In the Yarra Ranges, the Northern Yarra Landcare Network continued its Reconnecting People with Nature project in 2012, holding over 16 workshops and planting days with a combined attendance of over 500 people. As part of the project, the Network is also supporting the re-establishment and development of new Landcare groups in the local fire-affected communities of Steels Creek, Dixon's Creek and Chum Creek. The Reconnecting People with Nature project assists these groups to work closely with public land management agencies to address issues across public and private land boundaries, such as pest plant and animal control, as well as soil and river health issues.

In 2013, it is anticipated that some of these recovery projects will wind down, having achieved their aims, while others will transition into ongoing projects to implement plans and maintain strengthened community networks with an interest in environmental values.

Green Connections Project

The People and Parks Foundation, with funding from VBAF, engaged with communities and local schools around Kinglake and Marysville in hands-on environmental rehabilitation projects, aimed at improving physical and mental health. Activities included tree planting, walking track construction, weeding and the manufacture and installation of nest boxes.

The project included the production of a DVD titled 'Nest' by a local filmmaker, which captured the journey of school children as they reconnected with the forest around them, supported by a skilled artist and People and Parks staff. They did this by creating their own mosaic installations on the surfaces of sitting rocks and ephemeral sculptures from materials within the forest.



Students from Kinglake West Primary School created mosaics on sitting rocks in a local forest reserve as part of the Green Connections project



Volunteers from NSW helping fire-affected farmers to remove damaged fencing



Sugar gliders found in a nest box during a fauna survey

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network Fire Recovery Projects

The Upper Goulburn Landcare Network has played a key role in supporting fire-affected landholders across the Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires with their fire recovery projects. Often overwhelmed with the sheer volume of recovery tasks involved in re-establishing critical farming infrastructure, many landholders have been extremely grateful for the help offered by Landcare members and volunteers, who worked side by side with them to rehabilitate and protect their precious environmental assets.

In 2012, with the help of a project co-ordinator and hundreds of volunteers, their Fencers Without Borders project assisted 14 landholders with the

removal of damaged fencing and establishment of 32 km of new fencing. This will protect important terrestrial and waterway habitats, as farmers reintroduce grazing to their properties.

The Fauna project continued its surveys of mammals, bats, birds and reptiles to better understand how animal populations were recovering three years after the fires. With the help of 179 volunteers, 144 nest boxes were installed for birds and mammals to replace nesting hollows. Under the Lorax Project, 12,110 trees were planted by 482 volunteers, to restore damaged habitats, and 11.2 hectares of woody weeds were removed with the help of 181 volunteers.

FIRE RECOVERY UNIT

This document has been produced by the Fire Recovery Unit, Regional Development Victoria. The Fire Recovery Unit was established by the State Government to assist people and communities affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The Fire Recovery Unit is responsible for monitoring and reporting on rebuilding progress, communicating key information and providing advice and support to communities and local government. It also provides an important interface between the State Government and affected communities regarding bushfire recovery.

Contact the Fire Recovery Unit on:

Phone: 1800 055 714

Email: fire.recovery@rdv.vic.gov.au

Website: <http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/fire-recovery-unit>

Acronyms

ACGB	Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement
BBCAG	Bushfire Bereaved Community Advisory Group
BCSP	Bushfire Communities Support Program
CAC	Community Advisory Committee
COGA	Community On-Ground Assistance Program
FRRR	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
FRU	Fire Recovery Unit
GROW	Grants for Resilience and Wellness
RAS	Rebuilding Advisory Service
VBAF	Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund



Bushfire Recovery Services Guide

A broad range of both local and specialised bushfire recovery services will continue to be available across Victoria in 2013.

The Bushfire Recovery Services Guide, available on the Fire Recovery Unit website, is regularly updated and provides a comprehensive list of services and relevant contact details.

Download the guide at www.rdv.vic.gov.au/fire-recovery-unit or call 1800 055 714 for assistance.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you would like this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, please phone 13 22 15 (voice calls) or email rdv@rdv.vic.gov.au.

This document is also available in an accessible format on the internet at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.



This update was published by the Fire Recovery Unit in the Department of Planning and Community Development. Contact the Unit on 1800 055 714 or email fire.recovery@rdv.vic.gov.au. Also visit www.rdv.vic.gov.au/fire-recovery-unit

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