

Mallacoota District Recovery Update

MAY 2021



Fuel, debris and environmental management

As we are all aware, there are a range of views around the management of vegetation and fuel in Mallacoota, the protection of environmental values and the management of burnt vegetation.

We recognise the important work that the Mallacoota Fuel Management Working Group (FMWG) has done under the leadership of Lyn Harwood in engaging with the Mallacoota community and agencies (including our Emergency Management team) to develop agreed approaches to fuel management.

In several areas of Council-owned or managed land, for example Mortimer's Paddock, the FMWG is continuing to work through an approach that protects the important environmental values in this area while also addressing the identified fuel related risks. There are significant obligations on Council and other parties to ensure protection of the littoral rainforest which is a listed ecological community under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

We will work with DELWP to implement an agreed approach that both manages fire risk and protects the environmental values, subject to confirming funding to support this work.

Similarly, in relation concerns raised around debris accumulated along Lakeside Drive, and recognising the range of views, we are proposing to undertake an assessment of this area in relation to both fuel risk and environmental values.

We are generally only able to undertake very limited fuel management and clean-up of debris along roadsides. Where this is beyond our available resources, we will advocate for funding to undertake the necessary works.

We also appreciate the concerns raised around burnt vegetation on Council-managed land, particularly in areas where it appears fire impacted vegetation will not regenerate. We understand this vegetation can be a reminder to some people of the impacts of the fires. However, it is not practical to remove all reminders of the impact of the fires.

There are a range of views in the community in relation to the management of vegetation, but it is neither practical or appropriate to remove all the fire-killed vegetation. While fire-killed, such vegetation can also still play an important role as habitat.

Where it is established that vegetation is not likely to regenerate by itself, the vegetation can be assessed in line with previous and emerging habitat characteristics and restoration based on supporting vegetation development in priority areas. Necessarily this work will be targeted and focus on priority areas.

We have assessed and removed fire killed trees along roadways and walking tracks that have been deemed hazardous. Fire-killed vegetation will continue to deteriorate and may become hazardous over time. Community members can report hazardous trees on Council-managed land by contacting our customer service centres on the

number below. Where fire-killed trees are assessed as hazardous and posing a risk to roadways, walking tracks or similar, we will take action to address the hazard.

We are aware that some members of the community have already or would like to take action to clean up debris on Council-managed land. There may be a range of views about whether material should be removed or not. There is also a need to:

- Identify and protect relevant environmental values
- Comply with relevant environmental regulations may apply
- Seek consent from Council to undertake works on Council-managed land (most commonly this occurs through groups such as Landcare).

There are inherently a range of safety risks in undertaking vegetation works and so, in general, such works need to be undertaken by suitably trained people with the necessary equipment.

Works update

Secret Beach: Work has commenced and will take around 8 weeks for completion.

Pittosporum Walk: Will be scoped in detail upon completion of Secret Beach Access.

Shady Gully: Work has gone out to tender and is estimated to commence in June.

Genoa Pedestrian Bridge: We are on target for the bridge to be open to pedestrians by Christmas 2021.

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Streetspace and Bastion Point

The Mallacoota Streetscape and Bastion Point project control groups (PCG) have been established and are made up of representatives from Council, MADRA and MDBTA.

PCGs are developing Project Reference Groups (PRG), made up of key stakeholder and interest groups within the community relevant to each project.

PRGs will be contributing both their local and technical knowledge about issues that are relevant to the projects and provide representation for their stakeholder interests.

We look forward to providing more details in the future as PRGs reach out as part of a wider stakeholder and community engagement plan.

Seawall Construction underway

The project to replace a section of failing seawall adjacent to the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park has started.

Initial works include replacing a 200-metre section of the seawall with a new precast concrete wall and galvanised piles. The new wall will be constructed one metre in front of the existing seawall, which will be left in situ.

The project, costing \$1 million, is being co-funded by Council and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), and is scheduled for completion in August 2021. Council awarded the construction to Jarvis Norwood.

The works will cause some level of disruption and parts of the foreshore and Panoramic Drive will

be inaccessible. The Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park is in contact with affected guests and will continue to liaise with visitors. Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3tBTill>

Did you know?

We have a new grant application portal called Grant Guru. Check it out at <https://eastgippsland.grantguru.com.au/>

Industrial land supply assessment

In the past community members have expressed the demand for further industrial land for Mallacoota.

In 2012 a consultant was contracted to carry out an Industrial Land Supply Assessment for the shire, including Mallacoota.

Following the 2019-20 fires, the demand for additional industrial land supply was again highlighted by MADRA in its draft Recovery Plan. As a result, we have appointed the previous consultant to conduct an updated industrial land supply assessment for Mallacoota to scope out any opportunities and identify potential solutions.

The assessment will start in the coming weeks. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Anne Kaiser, Economic Recovery Officer at Council.

Gipsy Point scores TELCO upgrades

As part of the Federal Government's Regional Connectivity Program to improve telecommunications across East Gippsland, Gipsy Point will soon benefit from an upgrade, with a base station being installed at Gipsy Point.

National Emergency Medal opportunity

The National Emergency Medal is an award available to persons who provided either significant or sustained service (or both) during a nationally significant emergency.

The bushfires of 2019/2020 were declared a nationally significant emergency for the purpose of the National Emergency Medal on 2 December 2020.

The Medal is managed by the Office of the Governor General and is open to members of the community, volunteers or agency staff that have provided sustained service being:

- Service in the protection of lives and property; or in the service of interests, that are not their own;
- In direct response to the emergency (including support that enables or facilitates the emergency response).
- In East Gippsland (or other fire impacted municipalities).
- Between 21 November 2019 and 20 February 2020
- The minimum duration of service of 5 days

To learn more about the Medal and its history, eligibility criteria, or to apply, visit the Governor-General's website <https://www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awardsnational-emergency-medal/bushfires-2019-20>

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Rebuild Support Service

The Rebuild Support Service can support any landowner who lost a dwelling or sheds in the 2019/2020 fires, particularly in navigating the approvals that may be needed for rebuilding. In many cases, registering with the RSS can also inform eligibility for financial rebuild support.

For more information about the RSS there are several options:

- Contact the team directly at BRSS@egipps.vic.gov.au
- Make contact through your bushfire recovery support worker
- Through your local Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) Hub
- On our Bushfire Rebuilding web page <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/bushfire-rebuilding>

The RSS can meet with residents one-on-one in BRV Hubs, or provide support by phone or video conference depending on your accessibility or preference.

Open for business

We would like residents and visitors alike to know that our Visitor Information Centres (VICs) are open across East Gippsland, including weekends, to help inform and guide you on all the wonderful places, activities and

accommodation our region has to offer.

To learn more about exploring your own backyard, or to showcase our beautiful area to visitors, pop into one of our VICs, visit our website <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/leisure/tourism>, or the Visit East Gippsland website <https://www.visit-eastgippsland.com.au/>

Visit Victoria have also recently launched the new 'All Kinds of Wonder' Magazine, aimed at driving tourism in Gippsland.

Developed from bushfire recovery initiatives, the magazine has a heavy focus on East Gippsland, with a nod to the other three parts of Gippsland across its 16 pages.

The aim of the magazine is to drive awareness of our beautiful part of the world and allow for planning and visitation for autumn and into early winter.

Over 330,000 copies of the magazine being distributed across Victoria, including Gippsland as an insert, and are available at all East Gippsland VICs.

Last road bridge reopened

On Friday 30 April we officially opened the Hospital Creek Bridge at Wairewa - an important milestone in celebrating the strength of our community and the

recovery after the 2019/2020 Black Summer Bushfires.

The bridge opening also marked the successful completion of our bushfire-impacted timber road bridge replacement program. During the fires we had 13 timber road bridges and two heritage listed pedestrian bridges destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

Our first bridge replacement - the Waterholes Creek bridge in Deptford - was replaced within 6 weeks of the fire impacting the area. The remaining 12 bridges have been completed over the past 12 months, with works totalling more than \$4.5 million.

Vote for Mallacoota!

The finalists are in for the Victorian Top Tourism Town Awards with 22 towns in the running from across Victoria. The Top Tourism Town Awards recognise and celebrate towns that offer an amazing visitor experience. This year's finalists include three East Gippsland towns, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville and Mallacoota.

To cast your vote for Mallacoota and go into the draw to win some great prizes, visit <https://www.vtic.com.au/toptourismtown/mallacoota>

We were pleased to be able to support the local nominations through our Visitor Information Centres.

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