

Council Storm Recovery Number: 5366 1323

## Moorabool June 9-10 Storm Event 2021 – Community Newsletter No. 11

### Merry Christmas from the Storm Recovery Team

From all of us in the Moorabool Storm Recovery Team, we would like to wish you a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

During 2021, we:

- faced two major storm events
- held Community Pop Up Hubs
- held roving Community BBQs
- hosted Dr Rob Gordon to talk about social recovery
- undertook numerous visits to impacted properties
- spoke to hundreds of residents via our Storm Recovery Number
- cleaned up storm debris from 97% of Council roadsides
- supported impacted residents to: apply for BRV's Residential Clean Up Program; fulfil insurance claims; find local contractors; move to crisis accommodation - and much more.

Thank you to the entire Moorabool community for your ongoing resilience. We appreciate that this has been an extremely challenging year for all, and we hope you can take a well-deserved rest to spend time with family over the holiday period.

We will be back in January to continue to support you through your recovery process.

The Storm Recovery phone line will be closed from Friday 24 December 2021 to Tuesday 4 January 2022.

During this time, if you need assistance with an emergency, call:

- Triple Zero - for immediate threat to safety or life: 000
- SESVic - if a tree has damaged or is blocking access to your house: 1800 226 226
- Council's Emergency line - if a tree is down over a Council road: (03) 5366 7100

### Recovery grants for primary producers

Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding has been announced to assist any primary producers who were directly affected by the June storm event.

The maximum grant amount available for this program is \$25,000 and the money will go towards clean-up and recovery activities needed to reinstate primary production enterprises.

To find and more and see if you're eligible, visit <https://www.ruralfinance.com.au/industry-programs/victorian-floods-and-storms-clean-up-and-restoration-grants>



Marcus Swinburne, Regional Engagement Manager of Telstra with Cr Ally Munari and Moorabool's Chief Emergency Management Officer, Cherie Graham, at one of our roving Community BBQs.



Salvation Army Australia volunteers with one of our Storm Recovery Case Support Officers, Linda Cole, at our Community BBQ in Spargo Creek.

## Six Months on with Dr Rob Gordon

Thank you to everyone who attended our live talk with Dr Rob Gordon on Thursday 9 December at the Blackwood Hall.

Dr Rob spoke about social and psychological recovery following a disaster such as the June storm. It was a hugely valuable session for both residents and staff.

To watch the recorded live stream of the talk, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuZH-0R6htc>



Deputy Mayor Cr Tonia Dudzik with Dr Rob Gordon and the Storm Team Leader and Community Recovery Officer, Kristi Sullivan.

## How would you like us to support you over the next six months?



We are currently conducting surveys for the Storm Recovery Team's future planning. Your input will help inform how we work alongside the community as we continue the recovery journey over the next six months.

Volunteers from the Australian Red Cross and the VCC Emergencies Ministry may visit you at your property, to listen to your storm experience and stories and leave you with an information pack and a survey to complete.

You can also fill in the survey online via this QR code.

We thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, you can call the Storm Team on (03) 5366 1323 during business hours from Tuesday 4 January, 2022.

## Call for content: attention artists, photographers, creatives

Have you got photos, video footage or artwork depicting the June and October storms?

We'd love you to share them with us. We're planning some content to commemorate one year post the storm, in June 2022.

We would love to use images, video footage and artworks by the community.

Send us content that captures:

- During the storm
- Post the storm
- Your clean-up journey
- Local wildlife and vegetation
- Impact on the Wombat State Forest
- Any anything else relating to storm recovery

Be as creative as you like!

Email all content through to our Storm Recovery Communications Officer:  
[tsass@moorabool.vic.gov.au](mailto:tsass@moorabool.vic.gov.au)



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## Storm and Flood Financial Counselling Program

The Storm and Flood Financial Counselling Program is open to Victorians affected by the June 2021 storms and floods.

The program can connect you to a financial counsellor to help you to:

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

Speaking to a financial counsellor early can help stabilise your finances, reduce stress and allow you to focus on other areas.

The Storm and Flood Financial Counselling Program is available on the Storm and Flood Recovery Hotline, a single state-wide number (1800 560 760).

## How to access Mental Health Support

### Storm and Flood Recovery Support Hotline

Call 1800 560 760 and a Recovery Support Worker can assist you in accessing mental health support through Central Highlands Rural Health. This is a confidential referral.

### Partners in Wellbeing Helpline

Free and confidential wellbeing coaching for businesses and individuals. This service is available 7 days a week via email, chat or phone call. Find more info at: <https://www.partnersinwellbeing.org.au/>

### Australian Red Cross

Support and resources to look after yourself and your family when disasters happen. Visit <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/looking-after-yourself>

### Beyond Blue

Information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live. Call 1300 22 4636 or visit <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

### Lifeline

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention. Call 13 11 14 or visit <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

## Fire Season

As of Monday 13 December, the CFA have declared Moorabool Shire to be in Fire Danger Period.

Find out what you can and can't do during the declared Fire Danger Period, and on days of Total Fire Ban, when fires in the open air are legally restricted.

Visit: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings/can-i-or-cant-i>

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## DELWP December Update

As you are all aware, the Wombat State Forest and surrounding areas have been significantly impacted by the severe weather event that occurred on 10 June 2021 and then again by storms on the 28 and 29 October 2021. As a result, more than 80,000 hectares of forest and 1,500 km of the main road network managed by DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) has been impacted.

Since the first storm event in June, DELWP has been working closely with partner agencies including local government areas, Parks Victoria, Bushfire Recovery Victoria and VicForests to support the community and undertake recovery works. Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) crews are working hard in storm impacted areas to clear fallen timber from roads and tracks, restore recreation sites and manage the bushfire risk across the landscape.

### Key updates on the reopening of the Wombat State Forest

From 12 November, three recreation sites in the Wombat State Forest were reopened to members of the public following the October storm event - Carrolls Springs, Werribee River Picnic Area and Balt Camp.

The Public Safety Zone has remained in place across the rest of the Wombat State Forest while crews have continued their work to assess and clear impacted areas.

The Public Safety Zone will end on 22 December and members of the public will be able to access more areas of the Wombat State Forest from this date.

This includes the following additional recreation sites:

- Nolans Creek Picnic Area
- Wombat Creek Picnic Area

All roads are also open except for:

- Chettle Rd – From North Blackwood Road to Amblers Lane
- Saltwater Road

However, please be mindful that some local road, track and recreation site closures will be in place across parts of the forest as works continue.

This includes:

- Jack Cann reserve
- Colbrook Reservoir
- All walking tracks

We ask all visitors to please adhere to any signs that are in place for their own safety and the safety of our crews who continue to work in these areas. For up-to-date information or alternative locations to visit, please download the **More to Explore App**.

Our crews have also now cleared and opened 524km of the 625km (85%) major access roads that were impacted by the storm events this year.

The remainder of the tracks that were closed in June are predominantly four-wheel drive access only and most are not required for emergency management response. Many of these tracks are often closed or inaccessible during years when an extreme weather event has not occurred.

### Funding boost for ongoing storm repairs



The Victorian Government has provided more than \$73 million to help with ongoing repairs and recovery works following the devastating June flood and storm event.

Funding will support DELWP and Parks Victoria to continue the significant program of works already underway.

As part of this funding DELWP Grampians Region received \$2 million to repair roads and access tracks needed for public land firefighting and \$1.4 million for debris management and removal.

Threatened species assessments and protection will be supported by more than \$600,000 and \$328,215 is being provided for weed control on public land.

### **Removal of debris on public land**

From late January 2022 members of the community may start to see VicForests assisting FFMVic to manage large fallen or hazardous trees on roads and road reserves in State forests and national parks thanks to a new agreement.

Under the new agreement, DELWP will maintain oversight of all works. However, VicForests will assist in some locations, using their specialised skills, machinery and equipment.

The highest and best end use will be considered for debris removed under the agreement. This can include community firewood and timber to supply local mills and construction.

As these works start to commence, re-opening fire access networks will continue to be our priority as safe, rapid access is essential for fire suppression in the hotter months.

We're also working to clear finer fuels created by the storms, as these will dry out and could burn during fire season.

The majority of the larger debris including tree trunks and limbs will not significantly add to bushfire risk for the upcoming season as they are still green and will not readily burn. In some broadacre windthrow areas, the fuel arrangement will mean that some of the finer debris attached to trunks and limbs will dry out and present a fire risk. These high-risk fuel arrangements are being treated as an immediate priority.

A focus on community safety continues to guide DELWP's work in storm impacted areas, however ensuring the health of the Wombat State Forest will also be a key priority. Work has commenced to plan for the management of forest health, including post-storm weed and pest impacts.

Environmental, biodiversity and cultural values will be managed during this process.

Fallen trees provide valuable habitat for our wildlife, so we will keep those on public land that are important for protecting biodiversity values. People are not to damage, disturb or destroy dead or live standing trees or collect visibly hollow logs or logs growing moss or fungi.

DELWP intends to further engage with communities regarding planned debris management operations from January 2022.

### **End of spring firewood collection season**

The spring firewood collection season closed on 30 November and it is now illegal to collect firewood on public land which includes the six sites in the Wombat State Forest.

Fire prevention is one of the key reasons collection season closes prior to December each year when the risk of bushfire is highest, while also allowing the public spaces to be used for a range of recreational purposes over summer.

Any information the community may have about the illegal removal of firewood for sale can be reported to DELWP on 136 186.

Under the Forest Act 1958, people caught breaking firewood collection rules can face penalties of up to \$9,087 and/or up to a year in prison, if the matter is taken to court. Vehicles and equipment may also be seized.

For the full list of rules of firewood collection in state forests, go to [www.ffm.vic.gov.au/firewood/firewood-collection-in-your-region](http://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/firewood/firewood-collection-in-your-region)

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Locals Heather Bullen and Peter Bullen with volunteers from The Salvation Army Australia at our roving Community BBQ at the Moorabool Reservoir.



BRV's Regional Director Paul Rogers with Korweinguboora resident Alec Clancy on his property during clean-up.



Storm Recovery Case Support Officer, Linda Cole, drops flyers off to residents around the Barkstead area.



Residents and Storm Team members at the Dales Creek Community BBQ.



Storm Recovery Case Support Officer, Linda Cole, as COVID Safety Officer at Dr Rob Gordon's live talk at Blackwood Hall.



Storm Recovery Case Support Officers Sandi Thacker and Linda Cole with Community Engagement Officer, Rory Thomson-Ball, at the Spargo Creek Community BBQ.

**Have you missed our previous Storm Community Newsletters?**

Read them all on our website: <https://www.moorabool.vic.gov.au/Emergencies/Storm-emergency/Storm-event-newsletters>

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