

Conversation Summary

Purpose

In October we held two online storm recovery community sessions Mt Macedon, Macedon and surrounds (13 October) and Woodend, Ashbourne and surrounds (20 October).

The purpose of the sessions was to provide a safe space for community members to share their experiences, ask questions and tell us what support they need.

The session also provided a direct connection to organisations involved in the response including Bushfire Recovery Victoria, Parks Victoria, DELWP, CFA, and Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health.

These online sessions followed on from the face-to-face storm recovery drop-in sessions at Lancefield, Kyneton and Romsey before the most recent Covid-19 lockdown.

You said

- Disposing of stumps and root balls is a challenge.
- Fallen trees need to be safely removed
- Clean-up needs to happen, and you can't do it alone
- Future fire seasons are a concern
- You were trying to navigate the complicated balance between clean-up and habitat protection.
- Vegetation, biodiversity, and environment has been significantly impacted and needs to be prioritised
- You need more time than usual to burn off storm waste on private property
- You were concerned about the size of burning-off piles
- You would like to know what additional mental health resources are available.
- Covid-19 restrictions has made it difficult to work together and support each other. It was also very confusing to know what was "allowed".
- Applying for travel permits after the storm event wasn't clear and simple.
- Connectivity needs to be improved in the Macedon Ranges.
- More information on Council's plan to clean-up roadsides and reserves will be beneficial to community members.

"Thank you for this forum. It has been really helpful and I feel that there is assistance available to us that I was not aware of."

You suggested

- Opportunities to source discounted or free tube stock to replenish biodiversity should be offered.
- Using social media to help source clean-up support makes it easy for community members to get help from locals.
- Community members seeking support in this way should ensure they have adequate insurance cover in place. They should also seek advice from their insurer as to whether these activities are covered

- Leveraging partnerships to help the community recover is key. For example: Council is partnering with Landcare groups who are beginning to plan restoration activities.

We heard

- You need help, guidance, and advice for clean-up.
- Planning for future fire seasons are a priority
- Some residents still need help processing and disposing of fallen trees
- You would like more information and frequent updates on clean-up progress including clean-up of trees on public land
- You need relief and recovery information readily available, including more guidance about fire preparedness, what fine fuels are, what constitutes a fire risk and what liability risks for having other people (paid and unpaid) on your land removing trees and debris.
- Hearing the experiences of others from your community and sharing ideas is valuable; it's a community response.
- Connectivity, telephone, NBN needs to be addressed and improved.
- What's happening
- CFA Fire Preparation Meetings can be found at <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/your-local-area-info-and-advice/fire-preparation-meetings>
- New planning and preparation module is coming later in 2021 from CFA. Council will share when available.
- Council will provide education on fire prevention strategies and information e.g. fine fuels.
- Council has connected with Landcare groups, and will continue to explore this network.

What's next

Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences, ideas and suggestions at the community sessions.

Council have collated all feedback from the session and is:

- continuing to provide and promote free green waste disposal at transfer stations.
- providing free mulch to assist restoration and revegetation.
- removing restrictions on burning off for an extended period. You can burn off on land greater than one acre until the declared fire danger period comes in for the Macedon Ranges.
- Council is sharing information from response and recovery agencies such as CFA and BRV shortly, via our website mrcs.vic.gov.au/storm-recovery
- hosting a series of presentations to support health, wellbeing and healing hosted by recovery psychologist Dr Rob Gordon.
- working with State Government, and other recovery agencies to provide a coordinated response to the storm.
- lobbying the State Government for additional and ongoing support for recovery and clean-up.
- working closely with community members and businesses to understand their specific needs and support their recovery.



More information

Learn more about the community sessions and all storm relief and recovery contact on the Macedon Ranges Shire Council website mrsc.vic.gov.au/storm-recovery

If you or someone you love was impacted by the storm and needs help, please call the Recovery Operations Centre (ROC) on 03 5422 0237.