

Storm Recovery

Newsletter, September 2021

Contacts for residents/businesses

The Macedon Ranges Recovery Operations Centre (ROC) can be contacted Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm, by calling 5422 0237 or emailing recovery@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Assessment reveals more storm damage

Targeted calls and site assessments have confirmed over 1200 properties across Macedon Ranges Shire suffered damage from high winds and storms in early June.

A Secondary Impact Assessment led by Council's recovery team and support staff has involved calling residents and landowners across multiple townships and districts during September. The assessment team's work has revealed more than 330 people had not previously reported the damage on their property to Council or other authorities.

Previously unreported damage to private assets included dwellings, water damage, equipment, vehicles, sheds, fallen trees, fencing and stock losses. The assessment is also providing evidence of future funding assistance needed in the Macedon Ranges while Council advocates for resources from other agencies and levels of government.

If any affected landowners have still not registered their storm damage with either Bushfire Recovery Victoria or Council's Recovery Team, they should email recovery@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Community Recovery Drop-In Sessions

Community recovery drop-in sessions were held in Lancefield, Romsey and Kyneton in August. Due to COVID19 restrictions the

planned Woodend and Macedon sessions will be replaced by online forums in early October. Representatives from Bushfire Recovery Victoria, DELWP, Parks Victoria, Country Fire Authority, Sunbury Cobaw Community Health, Australian Red Cross, Victorian Council of Churches and Council will share information about their available support services.

For updates on these online sessions and advice on how to access to social support services, visit Council's website www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/recovery

Clean-up efforts make good progress

Council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria crews and contractors continue their large-scale storm response and recovery operation across the shire. This includes clean-up on road reserves with respect for significant vegetation, as well as replacement of signage, barriers and road repairs.

Good progress has been made on dangerous/high risk trees around the shire, with priority roads and roadside clean-up nearing completion in response to over 300 fallen tree reports and assessments. Officers are identifying sensitive conservation areas whilst gradually reducing the fire hazard. Some secondary damage remains outstanding.

Road surface damage to 25 roads (including patching works on 3 sealed roads) is under way. Bridge, road and guard rail repairs are due to be completed by Christmas.

Residents are urged to keep reporting any sites that pose an immediate danger to the Recovery Operations Centre on 5422 0237 or email recovery@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Watch out for road hazards

Dangerous trees are still along local roads in some parts of the shire. Be very careful and avoid travelling in heavily treed areas where you can. Clean-up continues, however, many trees remain unstable after the storm, particularly in high winds. We urge all drivers to continue be alert and use caution, especially in rural areas of Macedon Ranges Shire.

Please slow down in the vicinity of roadside tree clearing works and take care when near heavy vehicles and works crews. Beware of the risk of low hanging branches, damaged road surfaces and always drive to suit the conditions.

Bush reserves open up to public

Significant tree assessments and mitigation works have been completed in conservation reserves across the shire since the extreme weather in June. Overall, 55 bushland reserves and parks managed by Council were assessed for damage after the storm. Of these, 27 required works.

Nine key reserves are now open for local residents and regional visitors to enjoy. These include **Mount Gisborne, Daly Nature Reserve, Black Hill Reserve, Hobbs Road, Bullengarook Recreation Reserve (bushland area), Marsh Court Reserve and Bald Hill Reserve**. Management of fallen trees was handled differently in conservation reserves, avoiding the use of heavy machinery, and many fallen trees left in-situ as habitat.

Standing tree hazards including hanging branches still exist in the reserves off track and additional signage is being installed to highlight the residual tree risk to the public. **Noonan Grove Reserve** in Woodend is still closed pending the completion of works by mid-October.

Old Ashbourne Road Reserve in Woodend is still closed with major works along Old Ashbourne Road, including installation of wildlife friendly fencing, to be completed over the next few months. For more information on parks, reserves and gardens, visit <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/See-Do/Parks-Gardens-Reserves>

Stay safe during clean-up

Council is urging residents to stay safe during any ongoing clean-up activities on their own properties. We recognise many local residents are fatigued while dealing with fallen trees and lower hanging branches on private land.

Private land owners who are not physically capable, or have little training or experience in the use of chainsaws and other machinery, are urged to stay safe and seek advice or assistance from neighbours, professional contractors, Bushfire Recovery Victoria or Council.

We are working closely with BRV to prioritise advice, support services and assistance for older and more vulnerable members of the community. Please don't risk serious injury using chainsaws and ladders if you don't have the skills or mobility to tackle these tasks safely. We can refer urgent cases to our crews, contractors or the local SES for help.

Free firewood update

Over 1200 cubic metres of storm firewood is already split and cut, ready for collection at our transfer stations during October and November.

The 1850 residents who have already registered for the free firewood offer will be notified of their collection arrangements by a Council officer in coming weeks.

Booking times will be managed via Eventbrite, where residents will be supplied a ticket to present with their ID and/or other proof of residency at the transfer station.

Council has now arranged for machinery loading at each site to assist residents.

Note: We have more fallen timber to process and turn into free firewood, but for now we need to stop taking registrations. Check Council's storm recovery webpage for updates on www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/recovery

Hardship assistance and support

Contact the Department Families, Fairness and Housing on 1300 475 170 or via email EmergencyHardshipPayments@dffh.vic.gov.au

Agriculture Victoria

Agriculture Victoria provide a ready reckoner for horticulture, livestock and other agribusinesses experiencing issues resulting from the recent storms. For more information and advice, call 1800 226 226 or email recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Small Business Mentoring Service

The Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS) is providing mentoring sessions to storm affected businesses. The sessions are funded and delivered via Small Business Victoria. For more detail contact 0409 016 517 or email programs@sbms.org.au

Rural Financial Counselling Service

Are you navigating challenges related to financial stress or operating after the recent storm event? The Rural Financial Counselling Service offers free, confidential, independent and local professional services to assist you. A small business financial counsellor can meet you at your place of business or another location convenient to you. To make contact call 1300 735 578 or visit their website <http://www.rfcsvictoriawest.com.au>

Disaster Assist

If you have been affected by damage from the recent storm, you may be eligible for funding support. The Australian Government's Disaster Assist website provides information on funding available. Macedon Ranges businesses may be eligible for the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). To check your eligibility visit www.disasterassist.gov.au/pages/disasters

Council's Economic Development Team is also here to help where they can. Call Bob Elkington on 0400 672 308 or email ecodevadmin@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Green waste disposal

Council is providing free green waste disposal for residents and ratepayers at all our transfer stations for storm debris. Proof of residency will be required, such as a rate notice or photo ID with local address. Loads must be free of weeds, wire, food scraps and other rubbish. Visit <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Bins-Rubbish-Recycling/Transfer-Stations/Green-waste-drop-off>

Free mulch services

Tree clearing operations after recent storms have created mega volumes of mulch across the shire. Local residents and ratepayers can access free mulch at our three transfer stations at Woodend, Romsey or Kyneton. Come prepared to load this mulch yourself and be equipped with a shovel, protective clothing, containers or trailer. Check our website for opening hours and locations or call (03) 5422 0333.

Access to clean-up funding

Residents whose homes, businesses and sheds were destroyed in the June floods and storms can have their properties cleaned up at no cost, to help local communities to recover as soon as possible. Assistance is being provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

If you haven't already, local property owners are urged to register with BRV to have structural damage removed and any remaining dangerous trees on their properties assessed, and/or made safe at no cost. This voluntary program is open to eligible property owners impacted by recent storms, regardless of whether or not they were insured. Check your eligibility and register for the clean-up program at www.br.vic.gov.au/cleanup or phone 1800 560 760. Please carefully read BRV's webpage for detailed information.

Should you still need assistance to register online, or require help to navigate this process, you are welcome to call Council's Recovery Operations Centre on (03) 5422 0237.

Planning permit advice

Many local properties have been impacted by falling trees and/or falling branches. An existing exemption from the need for a planning permit is in place for repairs to existing buildings, including the replacement of walls and roofs for sheds and houses that may have been impacted by the storm. The repairs of your house and/or shed must be "like for like" to receive an exemption from the need of a planning permit. Unfortunately, if your building structure needs to be completely rebuilt you may need to apply for a planning permit. Council team will work with you to ensure a decision can be made quickly for you.

In all instances, either for structural repairs or replacing buildings, you will need a Building Permit from a private building surveyor. For more information about whether you need a planning permit please contact Council's planning team on (03) 5422 0333 or email planning@mrsc.vic.gov.au

Insurance

If you have property or contents insurance, you should contact your insurance company as soon as possible after the event. Ask your insurer for advice on actions you should take. Do not discard or throw away damaged items without first consulting your insurance company. Make a list of items that have been damaged and take photographs if possible. Keep receipts for any emergency repair work.

For assistance with insurance contact the Insurance Council of Australia on 1800 734 621 (24 hour hotline). You can find information on lodging a claim following a disaster at: www.disasters.org.au

General recovery information

Emergency Management Victoria relief and recovery advice including utilities safety: www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief-and-recovery/

If you experienced power outages beyond certain limits, you may be entitled to payment from your electricity distributor. Find out more from the Victorian Government website. <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/safety-andemergencies/power-outages/customercompensation>

General information about food safety during power outages is accessible from Health Vic: [Food safety during power outages - health.vic](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety-during-power-outages)

Council trees, blocked drains, safety or access
Council can assist in clearing trees and debris where it is causing access issues to and from your property. Please call 5422 0237

NBN and internet connections

If people have had their power restored and their nbn service is still suffering outages, they should speak with their phone and internet provider. nbnLocal based in Bendigo is works with local organisations and phone and internet

provider to access and restore the parts of the nbn network that have been affected.

Protect your health

Nurse-on-Call on 1300 60 60 24 - this is a phone service that allows you to discuss any health related issue with a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Victoria.

Do not use appliances designed for outdoor use inside a home, basement, garage, caravan or tent. Appliances such as BBQs, grills, camp stoves, or other devices that burn petrol, liquid petroleum gas, natural gas or charcoal should only be operated in a well-ventilated outdoor area away from open windows and vents.

Mental health

It is normal to have strong reactions following an emergency or distressing event. People can experience a range of physical, mental, emotional, and behavioural reactions. There are a number support services available to assist you and your family recover. If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one, call

Lifeline 13 11 14.

Other contacts:

- Your doctor or community health centre
- A counsellor or psychologist
- **Parentline** 13 22 89 or the **Kids Helpline** 1800 55 1800
- **NURSE-ON-CALL** 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 ours, 7 days)
- **Australian Psychological Society Referral Service** 1800 333 497
- Counselling support service is available through the **Victorian Council of Churches**. For further information please visit www.vccem.org.au/floods
- **Windermere Recovery Support program** – call 0408 521 320 8am-6pm or email stormrecovery@windermere.org.au

Family violence

Emergencies can put additional stress on close relationships and families. Abuse in a relationship is never acceptable, regardless of the circumstances, and is never the fault of the victim. **Call 000 if you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger.**