



Ararat Rural City

# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

## GRAMPIANS NATIONAL PARK, BELLFIELD FIRE UPDATE

FRIDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY 2024

### GETTING ON WITH THE JOB OF DISASTER CLEANUP

A lead contractor has been appointed for the Federal and Victorian Government's coordinated cleanup in the aftermath of last week's devastating fires and storms.

Hansen Yuncken is a disaster recovery specialist with the expertise to work on complex projects and will work with local sub-contractors to get communities back on their feet.

Cleanup activities for impacted households and communities will be jointly funded through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

**Demolition of damaged houses, asbestos and other hazard removal** will be included as part of the cleanup in the affected communities while hazardous tree removal will also be part of the work completed.

The Victorian Government will also establish a centralised green waste facility for the cleanup and is continuing to work with the Commonwealth Government to finalise its location.

This program builds on the support being provided by the Federal and Victorian Governments, which includes:

- Personal hardship payments of \$640 per adult and \$320 per child up to a maximum of \$2,240 per eligible family to help cover the costs of essentials like food, clothing, medication and accommodation.
- Australian Disaster Recovery Payments for people affected by fires in the Rural City of Ararat. Payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child are available to that community.
- Emergency re-establishment grants of up to \$49,300 for people who are uninsured and their primary place of residence has been destroyed or is uninhabitable.
- Prolonged Power Outages Payments of up to \$1,920 per week for households and up to \$2,927 per week for up to three weeks for affected small businesses.
- A Community Recovery Officer deployed to Ararat Rural City, Casey City, Cardinia Shire, South Gippsland Shire and Yarra Ranges Shire to help identify the recovery needs of individuals and families.
- The Emergency Recovery Hotline has been activated to process calls from anyone affected by fires or storms. To access recovery support, affected residents can call the Hotline on 1800 560 760.

The Recovery Support Program has also been stood up and is available for people to access via the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760. This includes mental health support, case management, business support and can connect people with the additional and existing services.

### POMONAL TRANSFER STATION

Pomonal Transfer Station is currently open every day for residents to dispose of general waste. Current opening hours are 7.30am - 7.30pm.

### DRINKING WATER

GWM Water have advised that Customers in Pomonal can safely drink GWMWater tap water again.

After consultation with the Department of Health, GWM have advised the 'Do Not Drink Tap Water' advisory for Pomonal that was issued due to the fires impacting water infrastructure has been lifted.

Water is now safe to drink from the tap. It is recommended that customers flush internal taps for two minutes to draw fresh water into their internal plumbing.

### TANK WATER

If your property has been affected by bushfire, your water source could be contaminated from debris, ash, small dead animals or aerial fire retardants. If the water tastes, looks or smells unusual, do not drink it or give it to animals. Also, you should not source water from a creek that has been affected by bushfire as the water may be contaminated. Please read more on private drinking water safety below.

Further Resource: After a Fire - Private Drinking Water and Water Tank Safety

### WATER SUPPLY

If your water supply was accessed and used by the CFA or Forest Fire Management in fighting the fire, you can request for it to be replaced. Please call in to the Recovery hub in Pomonal for more information and to complete a request form.

For a current list of local water cartage or tank cleaners, please contact Council in person at our Recovery hub in Pomonal, or call (03) 5355 0200.

### ROAD CLOSURES

Currently, road blocks remain in place into the Pomonal township, and only residents are able to access. You will need proof of identification that includes your address.

Fire crews and heavy vehicles are still operating in the area. If you are directed to leave an area for your safety please do so and please drive safely.

Information on updated road closures is available via 13 11 70 or the VicTraffic website.



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### RED CROSS WELLBEING WORKSHOPS FOR NEXT WEEK



Australian Red Cross invites you to join us

### Caring after a disaster: Community supporter wellbeing workshop

**SESSION 1** - Feb 27, 2024 06:00 PM – 08:00 PM - Melbourne AEDT

**SESSION 2** - Feb 28, 2024 01:00 PM – 03:00 PM - Melbourne AEDT

**SESSION 3** - Feb 29, 2024 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM - Melbourne AEDT

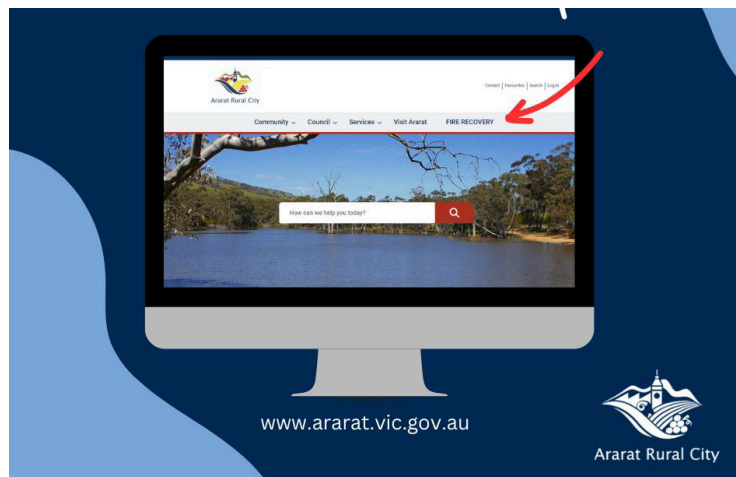
Register in advance for these meetings. Links can be found on the Pomonal Community Connections & Pomonal Info & Resource Sharing facebook pages.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with the information about joining the online meeting. If you have any issues, please email us at [recovery@redcross.org.au](mailto:recovery@redcross.org.au)

### DEDICATED POMONAL BUSH FIRE RECOVERY RESOURCE PAGE

Ararat Rural City Council has updated its website with all the latest information, FAQs, and helpful links for the Pomonal community, this information will be helpful for other fire effected communities.

Our staff will continue to be here on the ground at the Pomonal store ready to assist anytime you need. Don't hesitate to drop by if you have any questions or need a hand! Check out our website for more details: <https://www.ararat.vic.gov.au/pomonal-fire-recovery>



### EMERGENCY RELIEF PAYMENTS

The Victorian Government is offering emergency relief payments (via its Personal Hardship Assistance Program) to eligible community members whose homes have been impacted by the fire of 13 February 2024. Click here for more information on this program.

Emergency relief payments are designed to provide immediate financial help for eligible Victorians experiencing extreme financial hardship due to the fires.

You are eligible for this relief payment if:

- your principal place of residence is in an evacuation warning area, or the fires or storms have damaged your home, AND
- you have unmet immediate relief needs.

If you think you may be eligible for this emergency relief payment, please call the Vic Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 (Press 9 for an interpreter if needed). Alternatively, please call into the Recovery hub at the Pomonal store, and our Council staff will assist in connecting you.



Services Australia (Centrelink) have just announced a recovery payment available to residents who have suffered major damage to their principal place of residence, or major damage to assets.

Check your eligibility on our website before you lodge a claim.

The easiest and fastest way to claim is online through myGov. If you can't claim online, or need help claiming, you can also call our Emergency Information Line on 180 22 66.

Learn more here: <https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/disastersupport>





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### ANIMAL WELFARE

For animal welfare advice and information on support services for injured stock contact Agriculture Victoria on 1800 226 226.

If you have deceased animals that require removal, please contact Ararat Rural City Council on 5355 0200.

Smoke inhalation in pets can be dangerous. If you think your pet has been affected by smoke seek medical advice immediately from a vet.

For further information on animal welfare in a bushfire, please visit the Department of Agriculture website.

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies>

### PROTECT YOUR HEALTH

Smoke can affect people's health, people with pre-existing health problems, heart or lung conditions (including asthma), children, pregnant women and older people are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke.

People with existing heart or lung conditions (including asthma) should follow the treatment plan advised by their doctor.

Contact Nurse-on-Call on 1300 60 60 to discuss any health related issue with a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### SAFETY

**Ensure you are wearing clothing that protects your body and sturdy footwear.**

**Hazardous Trees:** Fire crews are assessing trees to enable access to your property

If trees on your property are marked with yellow paint or tape, this means the tree, or a tree nearby has been identified as hazardous. Be aware of your surroundings and stay clear.

**Asbestos:** Asbestos material and some fibres may remain from damaged structures.

This material presents a risk to your health. Do not disturb this material until provided with further information.

#### Other dangers at your Property

- Tree Roots can burn underground for weeks after a fire and may not be visible.
- Structures may be unstable – assess your risks while moving around your property.
- Agriculture chemicals and hazardous materials stored at your property
- Ground and soil can be unstable.

**Return to home kits** can be collected from the Pomonal General Store that include face masks, coveralls, gloves.

## Were you affected by the extreme weather events in Victoria?

If you were affected by the extreme weather events in Victoria on Tuesday 13th of Feb The Partners In Wellbeing hotline is here to support you during these challenging times.



Seeking assistance may be challenging, but you are not alone.

Whether you're contending with power outages or the stress they bring, our helpline is here for both you and your team.

Contact: 1300 375 330

For more information visit:

[partnersinwellbeing.org.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs](http://partnersinwellbeing.org.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs)

Partners in **Wellbeing**



# RFCS Victoria West

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL

## Rural Financial Counselling Service



Confidential, independent and free business and wellbeing support for farmers and small business owners navigating financial stress and uncertainty, including operating through drought, bushfire and COVID-19. All industries across Victoria's regional west.



# RFCS Victoria West Wellbeing support on farm & in business



Through your local Rural Financial Counselling Service



A PROBLEM SHARED IS A PROBLEM HALVED.

If you're a farmer or small business owner and engaged with one of our Financial Counsellors, we can offer you confidential, independent and free wellbeing support.

Our Wellbeing Counsellors are here to walk alongside you through a range of life's challenges.



### Counselling and Mental Health Supports

The following services are available for anyone affected by the recent Grampians bushfires who needs support.

Grampians Community Health Intake  
Phone: 5358 7400

Uniting Mental Health Hub  
Phone: 5332 1286

Budja Budja Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre  
Phone: 5356 4751 (Halls Gap) or 5352 6700 (Ararat)

The Orange Door Wimmera  
Phone: 1800 271 042

Headspace (for people aged 12 to 25 years)  
Phone: 1800 650 890  
headspace.org.au

13YARN (First Nations Support)  
Phone: 13 92 76

Beyond Blue  
Phone: 1300 224 636

Rural Financial Counselling  
Phone: 1300 735 578

Information also available from the Grampians General Store Pomonal  
Phone: 5356 6294

For all Primary Care needs including referrals to mental health support contact your local GP Clinic.

For people needing urgent mental health support  
Contact Grampians Health  
Phone: 1300 247 647

# RFCS Victoria West Small Business Support

Through your local Rural Financial Counselling Service



Confidential, independent and free business and wellbeing support for small business owners facing challenges or experiencing financial stress in uncertain times.

