



Ararat Rural City

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

GRAMPIANS NATIONAL PARK, BELLFIELD FIRE UPDATE

TUESDAY, 26TH MARCH 2024

HAVE YOU REGISTERED YOUR BUSHFIRE-DAMAGED HOME FOR CLEAN-UP WITH ERV?

If your home was damaged by the bushfires in late February 2024 and it is not covered by insurance, ERV can demolish it for free. This means that you can focus your efforts and resources on rebuilding.

You can register for demolition if:

- your home or rental property is in an eligible council area
- your home or rental property was affected by the bushfires in late February 2024, and
- you don't have bushfire insurance or you are underinsured for bushfire.

Register for demolition - Fill out the form online or call the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760

Pomonal Fire Recovery Update

- The Relief Hub (staffed by the Pomonal Resilience Committee) has moved from the Pomonal Church to the Pomonal Community Hall, operating alongside Council's Recovery hub.
- The Pomonal Hall will be closed from Good Friday through to Easter Monday.
- The Pomonal Transfer Station will be closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday, however open Easter Saturday and Sunday from 10am-2pm.
- The transfer station will now have a Council staff member there at all times to assist.



Ararat Rural City

29TH MARCH - 7TH APRIL

Sat 30 March

9am-2pm: Free children's craft activities in the pavillion @ Moyston Easter Market

Sun 31 March

Easter Sunday (Easter Bunny comes!)

Tues 2 Apr

11am-12pm: Children are Stinky! Ararat Town hall performance*
11am-12pm: Mini Makers @ Ararat Gallery TAMA

Thurs 4 Apr

3pm-5pm: Extended Lego Club @ Ararat Library*

Fri 5 Apr

10am-3pm: Drop-in Children's Craft Activities @ Ararat Gallery TAMA. (Free - all ages)



Ararat Rural City

Easter SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

***Bookings required.**

Please visit www.ararat.vic.gov.au/visitor/events or call 5355 0200 for more information and booking links!

8TH APRIL - 14TH APRIL

Mon 8 Apr

2pm-4pm: Movie Monday @ Ararat Library

Tues 9 Apr

5pm-7pm: Pool Party @ Ararat Indoor Pool!

Wed 10 Apr

11am-12pm: Mad About Science Workshop @ Ararat Library*

Thurs 11 Apr

10am-1pm: Drop-in Children's craft activities @ Pomonal Hall (Free - all ages)
3pm-5pm: Extended Lego Club @ Ararat Library*

Fri 12 Apr

10am-1pm: Drop-in Children's craft activities @ Pomonal Hall (Free - all ages)

FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION: VISIT ararat.vic.gov.au/pomonal-fire-recovery

SOCIALS





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BOB'S ARMY LEND A HAND



Thank you to all the volunteers that turned up on Saturday 23rd March as part of Bob's Army and the Ararat Lions Club to help clean up Pomonal residents properties. Around 50 volunteers worked hard in the morning before a well earned BBQ prepared by the Lion Club.



LIBRARY OUTREACH VAN

The Library Outreach Van will return to the Pomonal Hall, and back to normal service arrangements from Tuesday 2nd April. Our Digital Literacy officer is also back offering digital advice and sessions to residents of Pomonal, please call Moya on (03) 5355 0232 to make an appointment.



Fire Danger Periods

During the Fire Danger Period you can't light a campfire unless you check these rules:

- The wind must be less than 10 km/h. If leaves are moving around in the wind, do not light a fire.
- The campfire must be lit in:
 - A properly built fireplace of stone, metal or concrete.
 - Or a trench at least 30cm deep.
- The campfire must be no larger than 1 metre by 1 metre.
- The area 3 metres around and above the campfire must be clear of anything that can burn.
- Never leave the fire alone. A person who can put out the fire must always stay by the fire.
- The campfire must be put out completely using water before you leave.

If you are in a State Forest or National Park, there might be other rules you need to know about.



Total Fire Ban Days

On Total Fire Ban Days you can't light a campfire. Visit cfa.vic.gov.au/can



Scan the QR code to find out more. Together we can stay safe from fires.





how to cope with the stress of natural disasters

It's common to need support after being in or witnessing an event that may be traumatic, such as bushfires, flooding, cyclones or drought.

It's important to find the right type of support for you, as everyone will be affected differently.

There are specific things that are likely to be helpful in the days and weeks following a natural disaster. As time passes in the months after, the types of things that are likely to be helpful will be a bit different.

It can help to talk with a trusted adult about getting the right sort of help if it all feels a bit much.

Tips for the initial days and weeks after a natural disaster

In the days and weeks after a disaster, it is important to do things that make you feel physically and emotionally safe.

It can help to:

- Find ways to connect with others, especially those who help you feel OK and support your wellbeing.
- Do things that make you feel calm and grounded. Try doing things you enjoy and include these in your routine.
- Explore ways to get involved with repair and recovery of your community. This can help give you a sense of hope and connect you with others which is important to recovery.
- Be mindful of exposure to traumatic information through stories and traditional and social media. It can be helpful to take regular breaks from the 24-hour news cycle.

(Hobfoll et al, 2007)¹



Try to avoid or limit alcohol and other drugs.

Tips for the shorter and longer term after a natural disaster

- Acknowledge that it was a tough time. You may have been impacted by the disaster in other ways (e.g., through media, or losing a loved one). It's OK to remind yourself that the events were out of your control.
- Be patient with yourself. It can take time to make sense of what happened. It's OK to need someone to remind you that you're safe.
- It's OK to start small. It's important to keep up any regular routines or activities. This could be daily activities, like attending school, work, sports or catching up with friends. It could be planning your day and trying to stick to that.
- It's normal to feel like you want to help the recovery process. You might like to look for ways you can contribute to help yourself and others to rebuild. It's also OK if this doesn't feel right just yet.
- Be aware of the triggers that remind you how you felt during or after the disaster. This could include particular sounds, smells, or images.
- Practise being calm. You might try deep breathing or relaxation exercises. Rest and comfort will also help you to feel calm.
- Connect with others. Being with people who understand you and are calm can help you maintain calmness as well.
- Avoid getting into situations that are unsafe and avoid taking big risks.
- Try to eat nutritious food. Eating well can help with your mood, sleep, physical health and wellbeing.



In the weeks, months, and years after being impacted by a natural disaster there are things you can do that can help.



Common reactions to a natural disaster

Natural disasters can be hard to cope with. People can respond in very different ways, which can also change over time. Some people might feel OK immediately after the disaster but become overwhelmed later.

After a natural disaster people can experience:

- fear and anxiety
- grief and loss
- difficulty concentrating, remembering things, or describing what happened
- anger and confusion
- sadness and emptiness
- denial
- guilt
- shock.

Other challenges

Following a natural disaster, other areas of life can be impacted, these may include; **relationships with others, worrying about others, having to take care of siblings, wanting to be alone, sleep, appetite, and possibly alcohol or other drug use.**

These can be normal reactions and natural coping responses. It's helpful to try to address these early, to prevent them from becoming ongoing issues. If they're starting to impact on your life, reach out for support.



How to look after yourself during a tough time?

After a traumatic event it's even more important than usual to focus on eating and sleeping well and staying active.

It can help to:

- have a routine
- allow yourself some 'worry time'
- set some realistic goals
- limit alcohol and other drug use
- use your strengths and connect with others.

People do recover from the impacts of natural disasters

Most people who experience traumatic events are able to recover. Some people may need to access professional support to navigate ongoing challenges.



Getting support

Very strong emotions normally start to settle by about six weeks after the disaster. If you have trouble with your emotions or with your usual daily activities after this time, then think about getting some professional help.

If you ever feel unable to cope because of overwhelming emotions, or if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately.

1. Hobfall et al. Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. 2007; 70(4):283-315 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5668133_Five_Essential_Elements_of_Immediate_and_Mid-Term_Mass_Trauma_Intervention_Empirical_Evidence)



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

FIVE TIPS FOR REPLANTING YOUR GARDEN AFTER BUSHFIRES - CSIRO

Australians are starting to return to their homes and rebuild their lives after the bushfires. Creating a garden can be an important part of the process of recovery and reconnecting.

Bushfires have devastated towns and regions around Australia. Bushfires don't discriminate: they burn large forests, small farms, and backyard gardens alike.

Many people are now returning to their homes and starting to rebuild their lives. Creating a garden can be an important part of the process of recovery and reconnecting. So, how should you go about replanting?

We asked some of our scientists, including Linda Broadhurst (Director, Australian National Herbarium), David Bush (Director, Australian Tree Seed Centre), Tanya Doody (ecohydrologist and Principal Research Scientist), Suzanne Prober (ecologist and Senior Principal Research Scientist) and Andrew Sullivan (leader of the CSIRO Bushfire Behaviour and Risks team).

1. Replant when it's cooler

Don't rush out to replant. Replant when it's cooler and after there has been some rain. Checking if there is likely to be ongoing rain can be helpful. If it's going to be drier than normal, maybe wait a little longer.

In southern Australia, plants are likely to establish better in spring. If you plant now, during summer, you're going to put the seedlings under more stress due to high summer temperatures. Planting in late winter or spring will give your plants a better chance of surviving, as there will be water in the soil and (hopefully) spring rain on the way.

If you have a large block, you can take this 'wait and see' approach a step further. We recommend allowing the native bush to recover and regenerate itself. Many of our Aussie plants are adapted to survive in a bushfire. Native bush should recover on its own. There are some exceptions: for example, where a fire sensitive plant community (like a wetland) has been burnt in an unprecedented way or if the fire was extremely hot.

You can encourage the natural regeneration of plants by removing livestock and controlling weeds, which may be more likely to grow after the fire. This will help the ecosystem, with resilient local native species, to recover on its own.

2. Design a garden that's fire-smart

While you're waiting for the cooler months, use that time to plan a 'fire-smart' garden. It's not just about what species you plant: consider the design, or landscaping, of your garden. This can help reduce the impact of direct flames, radiant heat and embers on

your house, and reduce its vulnerability. For instance, some people recommend a row of dense tall shrubs to act as wind breaks and 'ember catchers' around the perimeter of the house. There are some great books available, including Joan Webster OAM's work on 'fire-smart' gardens, [Link will open in a new window] and Australian Garden Rescue: Restoring a Damaged Garden [Link will open in a new window] by Mary Horsfall.

The Victorian Government's Country Fire Authority (CFA) has also set out four principles for garden design [Link will open in a new window] in fire-prone areas:

1. Plant to create defensible space
2. Remove flammable objects from around the house
3. Break up fuel continuity (keep plants separate and avoid flammable mulches)
4. Carefully select, position, and maintain trees.

See examples of garden designs for suburban, rural, hill and coastal properties.

3. Choose more fire resistant or retardant plants

During a bushfire, the type and amount of plants around your house can play a large part in whether your house survives. You can control the amount of fuel near your home by carefully designing your garden and choosing the right plant species. Reducing the litter layer under trees is also important to reduce fuel load. Some of our research has found that unkempt gardens that were full of debris (fallen litter, twigs, branches) are more likely to lead to a damaged or destroyed house.

Replanting with native plants

So, if you're going to replant with native plants, which species are best for you? It really depends where you live. Talk to your local native plant nursery about the best species for you. The CFA's Plant Selection Key helps you choose plants for a high bushfire area. And groups like the Australian Plants Society, have created lists of fire resistant or retardant plants, including some beautiful trees, shrubs and ground cover, like:

- Native frangipani tree (*Hymenosporum flavum*)
- Native passionfruit (*Passiflora herbertiana*)
- Saltbush species, including *Atriplex* and *Maireana* species
- Dune Fan-flower (*Scaevola calendulacea*)
- Pigface (*Carpobrotus* species) and other native succulents

4. Avoid flammable plants

Some plants are highly flammable. Many of our Australian plants, like eucalypts, have highly combustible leaf litter, and peeling or ribboned bark. This, combined with volatile oil in their leaves, makes them a hazard to have close to your home during a fire.

The Australian Plants Society suggests avoiding species like these near your house:

- Eucalypt and corymbia species
- Tea tree and melaleuca species, like Crimson Bottle Brush (*Callistemon citrinus*)
- Lilly pillie trees
- Many wattle species, like Silver wattle, Blackwood and Prickle Moses
- Some exotic species, like Camphor laurel, bamboo, poinciana, English oak, gorse, lemons.

5. Seek advice from trusted sources, like local native plant nurseries

The suggestions of plant species above are not complete lists. It's best to contact your local native plant nurseries when deciding on what species to replant. The staff will know what the best species are, and they can also let you know about a plant's ability to regenerate after fire.



Landscaping for Bushfire: Garden Design and Plant Selection provides information on garden design and plant selection which can be used for new or existing gardens in high-risk bushfire areas.

- Download **Landscaping for Bushfire: Garden Design and Plant Selection - CFA Website**
- Use the online **Plant Selection Key** to help choose plants for a garden in a high bushfire risk area

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property/landscaping>



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TRAUMA AFFECTS THE WHOLE FAMILY IN DIFFERENT WAYS

When a family is affected by a crisis, everyone in the family will react in a different way. Understanding distress reactions and their effect on family dynamics can help the family to cope. Don't hesitate to seek professional help if you think your family is struggling to recover.

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-families

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-children-two-to-five-years

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-teenagers-common-reactions

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-teenagers-tips-for-parents



**NATIONAL
DEBT
HELPLINE**
1800 007 007
ndh.org.au

get back on track with **free** financial counselling



I'm feeling
overwhelmed!



How can I pay
these debts?

Speak with someone

Call us for **FREE** advice on how to manage your debts.



1800 007 007



Project of Lions Clubs



SINCE 2006
15 Years

Need for Feed
AUSTRALIA

needforfeed.org

Supporting
our farmers and
rural communities in
times of need since 2006

FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION: VISIT ararat.vic.gov.au/pomonal-fire-recovery

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