

October 2009  
Issue 04

# Mitchell Shire Bushfire Recovery Newsletter



## Welcome Newsletter Information And Distribution

If you are not already on the newsletter distribution database or if you have anything to add to the newsletter, please contact:

Jacqui Sims on 0407 944 414 or via email at [jacquis@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:jacquis@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au) or  
Jo van Dort on 0407 952 529 or via email at [jov@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:jov@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au)

## A Cup Of Kindness

Morning tea continues to be the highlight of the week for the ladies who attend each Thursday morning in Kilmore.

On Thursday 15 October the "girls" were treated to the gift of a china tea cup and the "art of sipping" was practised with Judy not quite getting which finger to raise!

Laughter is the order of the day at these weekly gatherings as the ladies relate the latest on building progress (or lack-thereof) and other issues in common.

If you are having a bad day there is always a sympathetic ear or shoulder but on the whole there are more laughs than tears these days. Judy was in fine form this week and we almost had to send her home for bad behaviour.

Once a month a dinner is held to get the men out (we can't have all the fun).

These nights are very successful and much hilarity is indulged in with the girls usually making a lot of noise and the men wondering what on earth the racket is about.

About 30 women attended the morning tea with a regular attendance of about 20 each week. We've all become close friends and a good support network has formed.

If you were affected by the fire (you don't have to lose a house to be affected), we have room for more so please come along. I have seen a huge improvement in the women who attend the morning tea and if you have had a bad day there is someone who understands.

Morning tea is at 10am every Thursday in the Church House, Church St., Kilmore. Look for the op shop signs for the car park.

Regards, Heather Knight



Left to right, standing: Kerrie, Robyn, Jo, Debbie, Helen and seated: Jenny, Judy and Donna

## Important Contacts

Case Management Service  
1800 050 400

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund  
1800 180 213

*Community Service Hub located at: 96 Walnut Street, Whittlesea*

Phone: 03 9719 1000  
Email:  
[whittlesearecovery@gmail.com](mailto:whittlesearecovery@gmail.com)

Mitchell Shire Council  
5734 6200

Building Commission  
1300 360 320

Victorian Bushfire  
Reconstruction and Recovery  
Authority  
1800 240 667

Department of Primary Industries  
– Broadford  
5784 0600

Nurse on Call  
1300 60 60 24

Department of Human Services  
1300 650 172  
[www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

CFA: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)  
DSE: [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au)

Mitchell Community Health  
Service, Counselling and  
Support 1300 773 352

Victorian Bushfire  
Reconstruction and Recovery  
Authority (VBRRA)  
Central reception 9092 5875

Kids help line  
1800 551 800  
[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

RSPCA for Bushfire Recovery  
information or animal issues  
9224 2222  
[www.rspcavic.org](http://www.rspcavic.org)

## Recovery Of Bush And Pastures

The protection of stressed and fire damaged native vegetation from grazing stock and allowing ground cover and pastures to re-establish after the bushfires is a high priority for Kilmore East landholders Leigh and Catherine Speechly.

After securing Caring for Our Country Fire Recovery funding, the Speechlys – who run a small herd of cattle – have successfully re-fenced over 14 hectares of remnant vegetation that was burnt in the fires.

“Some trees were showing signs of life while others needed more time and protection from grazing stock to have the best chance of full recovery,” Mr Speechly said.

“We created smaller paddocks to better control stock grazing when pastures have completely recovered in the future.”

“Rotational grazing allows us to manage the land according to its capability and we can now reduce grazing in certain paddocks when needed to prevent soil erosion.”

A stock containment area was constructed on the property shortly

after the fires following advice from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

“Containing stock until the bush and pastures have fully recovered is one of the most positive actions we have achieved since the fires,” Mr Speechly said.

“It took a fair effort, but it has paid for itself in the long run.”

The couple has sown down some paddocks to oats and rye grass and has used organic fertilizers to encourage growth.

Landholder in the fire-affected area can apply for funding under the Commonwealth Government’s Caring for Our Country Fire Recovery program, which is delivered in partnership with DPI and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

The program covers activities such as fencing remnant vegetation and waterways, soil erosion control, and eradicating high threat weeds.

For further information about the program please contact Bruce Radford at DPI Broadford on 5784 0600.



Bruce Radford from DPI and Kilmore East landholder Leigh Speechly inspect protective fencing to encourage remnant vegetation.

## Austral Bricks Offer

Austral Bricks has made available up to 2 million bricks and pavers to help rebuild homes destroyed by the February bushfires.

Anyone rebuilding their own home (as an owner builder) can apply to receive the first 2000 bricks and 10m<sup>2</sup> of pavers free of charge, and the balance of their bricks and pavers at a substantially discounted price.

A further 250,000 bricks (35 house lots) and 100,000 pavers will be made available at no charge on a case-by-case basis for community projects and cases of particular hardship.

Applications must be received by 31 December 2009. Anyone affected by the bushfires may contact Austral on 13 27 42.

For information or an online application form, go to [www.australbrick.com.au/vic](http://www.australbrick.com.au/vic)

## Free Horses To Good Homes

Misty Stebbing is working on making horses available for people who lost horses in the bushfires.

The horses are available free of charge and will require some re-education as they are ex-racehorses.

Misty will organise most of this re-education, and once the horses are at a basic level they will be made available to people.

The horses are appropriate for young adults and adults, but not for young children.

Misty asks that people who would like a horse email their experience, age, height and the details of the horse they lost in the fires, and she will contact them and try and match them up.

Misty's email address is [charon2@bigpond.net.au](mailto:charon2@bigpond.net.au) and her phone number is 0409 332 532.



## Sustainable Rebuilding Ideas

Sustainability Victoria has compiled a series of fact sheets on Sustainable Rebuilding Ideas to assist people rebuilding homes which were damaged or destroyed in the 2009 Victorian bushfires. A booklet is also available to provide a quick overview of fact sheet information.

Topics include passive solar design, appliance efficiency, renewable energy options, water, and finding green tradespeople and professionals.

For fact sheets or more information please visit [www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/sustainablebuildingideas](http://www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/sustainablebuildingideas) or contact Sustainability Victoria on 1300 363 744.

## Bushfire ReBuilding Blocks

Bushfire ReBuilding Blocks is a not for profit association established to generate and provide tangible support to people specifically rebuilding premises on their existing land following the Black Saturday fires.

They can help in a range of projects from clearing trees, brick laying, carpentry, painting, shed fit outs, gardening and more.

If you would like to know more about how Bushfire ReBuilding Blocks can give you a hand, call 0415 815 585.

Bushfire ReBuilding Blocks are also looking for people who can help through offering trade discounts and services, gardeners, people to make and serve lunch to volunteers, collecting and delivering building material, accommodation for interstate and overseas volunteers, the donation of new or used building materials etc.

If you are able to help, call 0415 815 585 or email [donate@bushfirerebuildingblocks.org](mailto:donate@bushfirerebuildingblocks.org) or check the website [www.bushfirerebuildingblocks.org](http://www.bushfirerebuildingblocks.org)

## Rural Number Plates

Residents affected by the February 7 bushfires who require a new rural number plate for their property are advised that these are now available for collection. Residents should contact Council on 5734 6200 to arrange delivery of the new plate.

## Extension Of The Income Recovery Subsidy (Centrelink Payment)

An Income Recovery Subsidy (IRS) was put in place by the Commonwealth, through Centrelink, to assist those who experienced a loss of income as a direct result of the Victorian bushfires. These fortnightly payments were due to end in early August but have now been extended until Tuesday 10 November 2009.

## Assistance With Aids And Equipment – Offer Extended

Funding is available to help meet the cost of repairing or replacing uninsured or under-insured independent living aids lost in the bushfires.

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) has extended the offer until the end of October.

Examples of types of independent living aids that may be replaced include: wheelchairs, mechanised hoists, hi-low beds, adjustable chairs, personal alarms, walking frames or other mobility aids, and personal care items such as dentures.

Ask your case manager to contact DOHA on 9665 8601.

## DHS Major Grants Closing

DHS major grants including the Temporary Living Expenses Grant and the Re-Establishment Grant will be closing on 31 December 2009. If you have not made an application for these grants or have any queries regarding grants please contact your case manager or come to the Broadford Service Support morning on Wednesday to speak with a DHS representative.

## Closing Dates For Emergency Payment From The Bushfire Appeal Fund

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has announced the closure of the following three emergency gift payments:

- The initial Home Dislocation gift, which allowed people to meet their immediate living expenses if their house was destroyed or uninhabitable for other reasons
- The Emergency Household Repairs gift, which was a short-term measure to help people make minor repairs to their damaged houses, such as repairing smoke or water damage
- The Emergency Tools of Trade gift, which support people who lost equipment vital to their trade.

The closing date for these gifts was Friday 9 October 2009. All other Appeal Fund gifts for individuals will remain open until Thursday 31 December 2009.



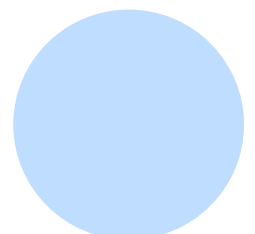
## Free Horse Gear

Highlands Saddlery in Kilmore has a collection of donated horse gear from around Australia available free to bushfire affected people.

To arrange a time to look at donated stock call Lisa on Monday and Wednesday from 9am to 1pm on 0437 093 825.

Please bring your Referral Card. Highlands Saddlery is located at 125 Northern Highway, Kilmore.

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## Free Legal Help

Do you need help with a legal issue resulting from the bushfires? Free advice is available. Contact the Broadmeadows Community Legal Service on 9302 3911 for an appointment at our Broadmeadows office or come to our drop-in service at the Wallan Multipurpose Centre in Wallan, any Friday between 2.30pm – 5pm. Alternatively, call the Bushfire Legal Helpline on 1800 113 432.



## Free Green Waste Disposal

Disposing your green waste at the Wallan Transfer Station is free for the month of October.

This is a great opportunity to clean up get rid of any green waste that you don't want to burn.

The Transfer Station is open Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10am – 2pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am – 4pm.

## Need Help Managing Your Money and Debt?

MoneyHelp is a new not-for-profit service funded by the Victorian Government providing free, confidential and independent financial advice to Victorians facing or experiencing job loss or reduced working hours.

MoneyHelp offers a range of products and services including:

- a website
- a free phone financial counselling service available Monday – Friday 9.30am – 5pm, interpreter service available; and

- an Information Brochure including a budget planner to help you take action

Practical information includes: debt payment options; hardship programs, Centrelink entitlements; how to approach creditors; and some handy tips and tools to help you sort your money.

If you're having trouble coping with your credit cards, school fees, rent/mortgage re-payments or other bills, visit [www.moneyhelp.org.au](http://www.moneyhelp.org.au) or call the phone line 1800 149 689.

## Free Art and Craft Classes

Free art and craft classes are available for those who were affected by the bushfires.

Classes will be held at UCanDoo art and craft school in Kilmore. Classes are available Wednesday and Friday mornings 9.30am – 1pm, and Saturday afternoons, 1pm – 3.30pm.

Participants can choose from painting, drawing, scrapbooking, beading, card making or paper craft

and tuition and materials are supplied.

Bring your friends and neighbours to relax, catch up and make something new and unique.

UCanDoo is located at 40 Sydney Street, Kilmore.

To book, or for more information, call Maria at UCanDoo 5782 0433 or 0409 933 595.

## Roses Off from Heritage Roses Australia

Heritage Roses Australia (HRA) has offered to source cuttings of heirloom or historic roses for people who lost roses in the bushfires.

The cuttings will be provided free of charge, and can be posted via conventional mail from the start of winter 2010.

Case managers or clients can contact HRA on the numbers below to provide a list of roses that they lost and want replaced.

HRA will then locate them and post them off at the beginning of next winter.

The HRA members that are coordinating donations are:

Shirley Yates:  
[alanshirley@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alanshirley@optusnet.com.au) or  
0423 364 698

Jill Collins:  
[normandcollins@bigpond.com](mailto:normandcollins@bigpond.com) or  
9775 4549



### 'Hub' In Broadford

Just a reminder that there are support services at the Broadford Community Centre 158-162 High Street, Broadford (opposite the petrol station) from 9am – 12pm on Wednesdays. Drop by, have a coffee and say hello.

In attendance is the VBRRR donations coordinator, Centrelink, Centrecare, DHS, and Mitchell Community Health Services. The VBRRR Mobile Building Advisory Service will also be there.

### Clonbinane Family Fun Day – NEW DATE

A fantastic Family Fun Day has been organised for Sunday 15 November, at Waterford Park Reserve in Clonbinane. This great day will provide lots of fun and entertainment for the whole family, right in the middle of the school holidays.

The day will begin at 11am and festivities will continue until 4pm.

Amusements will include Farmer Darryl's Petting Zoo, face painting, jumping castle and temporary tattoos. All activities will be free.

For those who enjoy more active pursuits, there will be 3-legged races, sack races, and gumboot throwing.

A speed ball competition will also be held – this involves throwing a ball as fast as you can whilst the speed is measured by police radar.

Prizes will also be awarded during a pet competition – so bring your favourite pet along.

Food will be available throughout the day, or bring a picnic lunch.

For more information, please contact Jacqui Sims 0407 944 414.

### Morning Teas In Kilmore

Morning teas are held every Thursday mornings at 10am behind the Uniting Church in Unions Street (up behind Kemp's Bakery) in Kilmore.

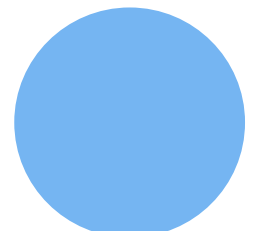
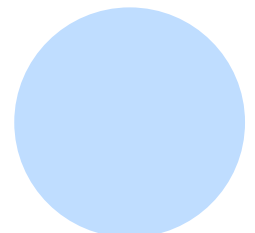
These morning teas have been a great success with many women attending. It is a get together in a safe environment for women who have been affected by the bushfire.

Morning tea gives the chance to exchange stories and to connect with others who have experienced similar events.

All welcome and enquiries can be made to Heather 0418 371 147.

### Monthly Dinner

The requirement at the latest monthly dinner was to wear a hat. Those who did not follow the dress code were required to wear a bag or tea cosy on their head! It provided for a great evening of laughs. For more information on evening dinners, refer to the story on the front page and call Heather on 0418 371 147.



## New National Warning System For Victorian Communities

A new national framework for fire warnings for the next bushfire season is being implemented by Victoria following an agreement by all Australian States and Territories.

The fire danger rating system will have a new category of 'catastrophic' (code red) to warn communities of the risk of fires that are unpredictable, uncontrollable and fast moving.

Under the system the community will be provided with a better understanding of the level of bushfire threat on any given day based on the forecast weather conditions.

For those who can't ensure their own safety, advice provided to communities on a 'catastrophic' (code red) day will be that leaving early is the safest option.

The new fire danger rating has been developed using the Fire Danger Index (FDI):

- FDI 100+ is considered Catastrophic (code red)
- FDI 75-99 is Extreme
- FDI 50 – 74 is Severe
- FDI 25-49 is Very High
- FDI 12-24 is High
- FDI 0-11 is Low-Moderate

In line with the Royal Commission's recommendations there will be two types of warning categories for this bushfire season – a 'watch and act' message and an 'emergency warning'.

Watch and act messages will advise communities that there is a heightened level of threat and that they need to stay informed and vigilant.

Emergency warning messages will alert the community that there is an imminent threat and immediate action is required to protect life.

A new slogan, 'Prepare, Act, Survive' has also been agreed to nationally and will be used this fire season.

The fire and emergency services will use 'Prepare, Act, Survive' to educate communities about what they need to do in preparing and responding to bushfires.

## CFA Community Fire Ready Meetings

Community Meetings will be held at the following locations. For more information visit <http://www.communityprograms.cfa.vic.gov.au>

Information covered at a Fire Ready Meeting includes:

- What are your risks
- Understanding the new Fire Danger Ratings
- Stay and actively defend or leave early
- The new strategy – Prepare, Act, Survive
- Making the important decision
- Preparing yourself and your property for bushfire
- Making a bushfire survival plan

## Safety In The Home Forum

Safety in the Home Forum provides information on fire safety, disaster preparation, exploitation, personal alarms and medication reviews.

Guest speakers will include Wallan Police, Villa Maria Commonwealth Respite, Country Fire Authority and Pharmaceutical Consultant from the Division of General Practice.

Tuesday 27 October, 11am – 3pm, light lunch provided. Wallan Multi Purpose Centre, Bentick Street, Wallan.

Please RSVP to Megan at Villa Maria Commonwealth Carelink and Respite Centre on 1800 052 222 by 20 October for catering purposes.



## Fire Ready Meeting Dates

**Flowerdale** – Flowerdale Recreation Reserve  
Friday 30 October, 6pm – 8pm.  
Ph 5799 1517

**Wallan** - Wallan Fire Station  
Monday 9 November, 7:30pm – 9:30pm. Ph 8746 1400

**Wallan** - Wallan Market  
Saturday 14 November, from 9am

**Upper Plenty** – The Shack  
Wednesday 11 November  
7:30pm – 9:30pm.

## Deluxe Getaways On Offer

The Victorian Holiday Offer is providing short breaks for bushfire affected people.

The getaways, which include up to two nights accommodation, range from boutique B&Bs, luxurious five star hotels, stylish self contained apartments to chic resorts.

Contact your Case Manager or local Donations Coordinator to register your interest through the Donations Management System.

Holidays can be taken until 30 December 2009, subject to conditions and availability.

To view the accommodation offers available, visit

<http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/bushfireoffer/accommodation/>

## Upper Plenty Recovery Meeting And BBQ

The next Upper Plenty BBQ will be on Friday 13 November from 6:30pm at The Shack. For more information, contact Kris on 0401 133 400.

## Is Your Child Doing VCE?

The VCCA (Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority) and VTAC (Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre) are working with fire-affected secondary schools to make sure that issues that may have an impact on student VCE performance are being taken into account.

This applies to both examinations performance and tertiary preferences. People with questions about Special Entry Access Schemes and the various categories including 'difficult family circumstances' should contact the VCE Manager or Careers Advisor at their secondary college or check the VTAC website [www.vtac.edu.au](http://www.vtac.edu.au)

## Kilmore East And Surrounds Community Advisory Group

An information session will be held on Monday 26 October at 7pm, in the John Taylor Room at the Kilmore Library.

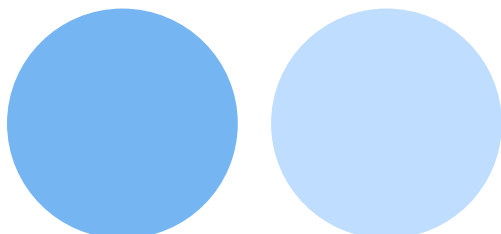
We want to gather information from residents in the area as to what their needs are for their community following the February bushfires. We want to know what you and your community feel are priorities for your area.

For further information call Carol Pullar on 0418 993 319 or Jacqui Sims on 0407 944 414.

## Rural Women's Network Newsletter

The special 75<sup>th</sup> edition of the Rural Women's Network – Beyond the Bushfires, is now available, honouring the courage, strength and leadership of rural women across Victoria, including those who are rebuilding their homes, lives and communities, and others who are working and volunteering to help with recovery.

The newsletter is available from [www.ruralwomen.vic.gov.au](http://www.ruralwomen.vic.gov.au) or call the Rural Women's Network on 9208 3650.



## Helping To Replace Photos

Do you have any photos of friends, neighbours, children, or families who lost theirs in the bushfires?

Those who lost their photos in the fires would love to have copies photos that others may have of themselves and their families, including past and more recent ones.

If you are one of our readers who receive this newsletter, but didn't lose your photos, please have a look through all your photos and call or write to old friends who you have photos of and offer to share your negatives or make copies. What a great opportunity to laugh over past hair-styles, fashions and reminisce over 'old' times.

## Burning Off Within Mitchell Shire

As of Thursday 1 October 2009 the following applies in relation to burning off.

### **Township Zone** (All land zoned other than farming)

Burning off requires a permit if over 2 cubic metres (6x4 trailer loaded 1 metre high).

Times: Wednesday and Saturdays 10am til 3pm.

### **Outside Township** (Zoned farming)

Burning off requires a permit if over 2 cubic metres (6x4 trailer loaded 1 metre high).

Times: Any time

**On days of Total Fire Ban or Smog Alert, burning is prohibited during the above times.**

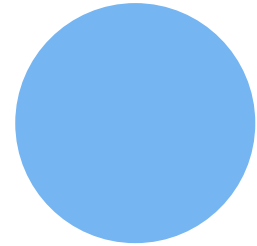
**All burns whether a permit is required or not should be registered with the CFA by telephone on 1800 668 511.**

### **Burning in the open air requires the following at all times:**

- Three metre clearance above and around site
- Water available
- Fire suppression equipment eg rakes, shovels, etc
- An adult must remain present with the fire at all times

### **Permits**

There is no cost for a permit to burn, however, sufficient time has to be given for Council Officers to inspect the site and arrange for a permit to be issued to the Property Owner. Permits are obtained through the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO) and Council's Environmental Services Manager Joe Watkins or for enquiries contact MFPO Admin Officer Jessica Brown on 5734 6200.



## Fire Recovery Waterway Grants

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority will visit your property to discuss grant options for fencing, revegetation and off-stream water.

GBCMA Waterways Staff will provide advice on waterway management, the level of funding support available and property planning.

Grant offers are based on the scope of the proposed project inline with the GBCMA Waterways Grant Guidelines.

Approval of the Waterway Grant for progression will follow receipt of the signed Grant Offer.

The landholder will carry out agreed works and the GBCMA will process the Grant Subsidy Reimbursement following inspection of the completed works. Contact the GBCMA on 5736 0100 or [www.gbcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au)



## Emotions You May Experience This Summer

The Integrated Primary Mental Health Service North East Victoria has produced a brochure titled 'Emotions You May Experience This Summer' to help people prepare for this coming summer and bushfire season.

The brochure provides a range of information to help identify signs of distress or triggers of traumatic events. Particular focus is on the lead up to the coming summer following the extreme fire season in early 2009.

Some of the things you may notice include:

- excessive alertness – being on the lookout for signs of danger
- fatigue, sense of unwellness
- disturbed sleep
- general aches, pains and a sense of danger
- poor concentration and memory
- irritability
- social withdrawal and isolation during the summer period
- inability to attend usual activities
- avoidance of work
- keeping children home from school
- conversations and thoughts dominated by bushfires
- other people being concerned about your level of alertness

If these signs cause you extreme distress or trigger a past traumatic event, please seek professional assistance.

### Children and Adolescents

The brochure also provides tips for identifying signs in children and adolescents. Some things to look out for include:

- changes in play, drawings, or conversations
- disturbing nightmares or dreams
- children behaving younger than they normally do
- anxiety about sleeping alone
- tantrums
- wanting to stay close to family
- talking about fire, summer and climate change
- bedwetting

You can help by:

- providing comfort, reassurance and support
- listening to your child's concerns

- making time to hug, cuddle and play with your children
- sticking to daily routines around meal times, bed times and going to school where possible
- being aware of how you talk around children

Remember: to look after your children, you must be able to look after yourself.

For more information on identifying these signs, please contact your local GP or the Mitchell Community Health Service on 1300 773 352.

For crisis support please contact:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Men's Line Australia: 1300 78 99 78

## Positive Parenting Service

Parents living in the Hume Department of Health Service (Mitchell Shire is included in this) can access a free program and telephone support service for families who have experienced the trauma of the bushfires.

The telephone support service program is designed specifically to help parents support children through the aftermath of the bushfires.

Parent can access up to three sessions tailored to meet the needs of individual families by calling 1800 880 660 to register.

## Counselling And Support 1300 773 352

Mitchell Community Health Service continues to coordinate counselling and personal support to residents of the Mitchell and Murrindindi communities affected by the February bushfires. Counselling and personal support services can be accessed by contacting our Service Access and Care Coordination (SACC) team on 1300 773 352.

**Other services available include:**

**Debriefing** for individuals, community groups and businesses.

**Access and referral** to other local health and support services.

**Financial** counselling and health services.

To make an appointment please call the SACC team on **1300 773 352**.

Supported by:

