

Flood Recovery in Murrindindi Shire

Edition #6

In this edition

Welcome to the latest edition of the Murrindindi Shire Flood Recovery newsletter. In this edition, you will find information on a variety of topics

If you know anyone who would benefit from the information in this newsletter, please share it with them and encourage them to sign up at this link: murrindindi.vic.gov.au/recoverynewsletter

Topics

- Upcoming events
- R U OK Day events wrap up
- October 2022 floods: Financial impact
- Inquiry into Insurers' Responses to 2022 Major Floods Claims
- Council's Grants and Sponsorship Program
- Weed management after floods
- Support spotlight: Partners in Wellbeing
- Available support
- Local update: Acheron



FLOOD RECOVERY HOTLINE
1800 560 760

Press 9 for an interpreter

8 am – 6 pm
Monday to Friday

Closed weekends and
public holidays



Upcoming events

Free Seniors lunches - October

Council is hosting free lunches for seniors living in Murrindindi Shire. The Seniors lunches are available for community members 60 years of age and over and will be held in Alexandra, Yea, Flowerdale, Eildon and Kinglake.

Come along enjoy a hot lunch, live music by Steve Paix, and hear from Council's Access and Inclusion Officer Andrew Langley.

Alexandra, Yea and Eildon are fully booked. Registrations are still open for the following:

- Kinglake – **Tuesday 17 October** from 12 noon to 2.30 pm
- Flowerdale – **Thursday 26 October** from 12 noon to 2.30 pm

For more details and to register, visit Council's website.

This project is supported by Victorian Seniors Festival, Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) and Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) funding.

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Lifting Farm Spirit - Thursday 19 October

A night of entertainment for all farmers, the Lifting Farm Spirit event features Warren Davies, aka the Unbreakable Farmer, for some comic relief.

- **Thursday 19 October**
- 6.30 – 10.30 pm
- Yarck Hall, 6583 Maroondah Highway, Yarck

This is a free event, light meal provides. Contact Andrew Embling on 0418 266 038 to RSVP and secure your seat. Bookings are required for catering purposes.

Laughter Clinics - 20 & 21 October

Two hilarious and informative Laughter Clinics are being hosted by Foundation Murrindindi in association with the Murrindindi Shire Council with funding provided through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). Time and venue details are below:

- **Friday 20 October**, Yea Community House, 6.00 – 7.30 pm
- **Saturday 21 October**, Alexandra RSL Hall, 1.00 – 2.30 pm

Attendance is free, however bookings are required. To book your seat, email info@foundationmurrindindi.org.au or ring Robyn Hill on 0488 007 688.

Online Flood Hub

Council has a dedicated Flood Hub on our website, where we share updates about the flood recovery in Murrindindi along with links to important information and resources. You can find information on support services, infrastructure updates, events, and how to prepare for weather events.

Visit the Flood Hub here:
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/floods2022

Updates

October 2022 floods and storm event - Financial impact on the Shire

The 2022 floods had a severe impact on local businesses and the visitor economy, which is a vital sector for many businesses and residents across Murrindindi Shire. In the last quarter of 2022, the Shire experienced an estimated 40 percent decrease in the number of visitors and visitor expenditure – an approximate \$12 million hit to the local economy.

Council is mindful of those businesses, which were severely impacted by the floods. For example, some of the Caravan Parks in the Shire had limited trade during the peak holiday period or were not able to trade at all. Council will continue to promote Murrindindi Shire as a holiday destination for Melbourne, Victoria and interstate visitors. The Spring 2023 edition of Caravanning Australia has a promotional feature on the pleasures of visiting Murrindindi Shire.

Assessments of local roads including bridges and culverts indicate that Council assets experienced damage in excess of \$30,000,000. This is in addition to the substantial damage to highways and major roads which are the responsibility of the Department of Transport and Planning such as the Goulburn Valley Highway, Maroondah Highway, Melba Highway and Whittlesea-Yea Road.

Council has commenced a procurement process for the delivery of a range of flood recovery road work projects, for which funding has been approved by the responsible government department to proceed. These flood recovery projects have been bundled into separate packages, and the first package is almost ready to be advertised via Council's website. Five more packages will follow, with all works scheduled for completion prior to the end of 2023. Advice on the location of work areas will be published in future newsletters and on Council's website.

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R U OK Day wrap up

On R U OK Day, Thursday 14 September, Council encouraged communities to come together and learn how to have meaningful conversations around mental health.

It has been a tough year for many in our community, particularly those affected by disasters. Disasters like the October 2022 floods can severely impact our day to day lives. Staying connected with one's community is crucial to many in their recovery, to regain a sense of normalcy.

Council hosted a pop-up stall in front of Alexandra FoodWorks, and supported the Alexandra Tourism and Traders Association and Friends of Kellock Lodge to run a community BBQ in Alexandra. Council also partnered with community houses and primary schools to share R U OK Day resources across the Shire.

Council's 2023 R U OK Day initiatives were supported with funding from Emergency Recovery Victoria, jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments.



Inquiry into insurer's responses to 2022 major floods claims

A federal inquiry into insurers' responses to 2022 major floods claims is now seeking input from the community. You can take the survey on the inquiry website:

aph.gov.au/floodinsurance

Council's Grant and Sponsorship Program

Applications are now open for Council's Grants and Sponsorship Program, providing financial support to individuals, groups and businesses in the Shire. The refreshed Program will continue to support projects and events that contribute to the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the community. Grant applications are now assessed quarterly, except for Quick Response Grants, which are assessed monthly.

The program offers funding to support events, activities, projects and individuals. To find out what grants are available and the eligibility criteria, visit the Council website:

murrindindi.vic.gov.au/our-services/grants-and-sponsorships

The current grant round closes 31 October 2023.

Do you have ideas for initiatives to help your flood impacted community?

As part of a joint funding arrangement between the Australian and Victorian Governments, known as the Disaster Relief Funding Arrangements, Murrindindi Shire Council has been provided with funding to host or partner in special events, activities or training to assist individuals and communities impacted by the October 2022 storm and flood events in their recovery process.

This funding is available in addition to Council's Grant and Sponsorship Program.

If you have ideas or suggestions for initiatives that you think might benefit your community, please call Kim Chadband or Vee Scott from the Flood Recovery Team on 5772 0333 to discuss your ideas.

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Support spotlight: Zoe Edmonds from Partners in Wellbeing

The following was submitted by Zoe Edmonds

The Partners in Wellbeing (PIW) Flood Team is funded by the Victorian Government, with a primary mission of extending crucial support to small business owners, their families, and employees who have faced the direct or indirect consequences of the October 2022 floods. Our team comprises of dedicated mental health professionals who are well-equipped to provide direct assistance for overall wellbeing and conduct workshops aimed at fostering a positive work environment.

In addition to these essential services, we offer insightful webinars to the wider community, addressing various workplace mental health concerns. Furthermore, we provide personalized guidance to tackle specific workplace wellbeing challenges. At PIW, we understand that everyone's needs are unique, and our diverse range of services is designed to accommodate these differences.

For those requiring more comprehensive assistance, our team can also connect you with our free financial counselling and business advisory services. Our Mental Health Consultants bring with them firsthand experiences of the intricate world of small business management, including staff management, financial stability, and the demands of self-employment in an ever-evolving landscape.

We invite you to reach out to us today and discover how our program can empower both you and your business to not only recover from adversity but to thrive in the face of challenges. Your wellbeing and success are our top priorities.

Zoe Edmonds is the PIW Mental Health and Wellbeing Consultant in Murrindindi Shire. You can contact Zoe directly on 0417 073 043 or zoe.edmonds@each.com.au for an informal talk or to make an appointment. Website: partnersinwellbeing.org.au

Flood Recovery Hotline

It is important to remember that you are not alone, and there is support available for you.

You can call the Flood Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760. Operators can help by providing information, linking you in with case management services and available mental health and wellbeing support.

The hotline is open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm, Monday to Friday, and closed on weekends and public holidays. Press 9 for an interpreter.



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Available support

Health and wellbeing support

Mitchell Shire Flood Recovery Hub

Mitchell Shire Council continues to operate its Recovery Hub located at 4 Guild Street, Seymour, which is open on weekdays from 9.00 am to 4.30 pm. A rotating roster of service organisations are available for individuals and businesses impacted by the floods. The Goulburn Flood Recovery Service (GFRS) is available onsite every day to everyone impacted by the floods.

Residents from across Murrindindi Shire are welcome to attend to find out what supports are available to them and to talk with services that operate in our Shire.

mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/services/october-floods-2022/flood-recovery-hub

Family violence support

Cases of family violence may increase after an emergency. Several organisations are working within Murrindindi Shire to provide information and support for family violence and child protection issues.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 000. For anyone requiring non-emergency support for family violence or child protection issues, The Orange Door is a first point of contact on 1800 560 760. For information on other services please visit our Flood Hub.

Mental health and wellbeing support

Disasters can have a devastating impact on people. You don't have to go through it alone. If you or a loved one needs extra support, speak with your local doctor, a mental health professional, counsellor, or psychologist. It can also be helpful to talk to someone who is independent but still understanding.

Visit the Flood Hub for a list of services to support you and your family.

Recovery Hub.



- A range of recovery support available
- Monday - Friday
- 9.30 - 4.30pm

mitchellshire.vic.gov.au



Goulburn Flood Recovery Service

If you have been affected by the October 2022 Floods, you may be eligible to receive support from a Flood Recovery Support Worker, through the Goulburn Flood Recovery Service.

Find out more at our Flood Hub, or contact the Flood Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760.

Agriculture support

Digital newsletter for farmers

Farmers and service providers are encouraged to subscribe to Agriculture Victoria's Flood Recovery digital newsletter to access the latest events and information via the Agriculture Victoria website: agriculture.vic.gov.au

National Centre for Farmer Health

The National Centre for Farmer Health offers initiatives for primary producers impacted by the floods, to support farmers' mental health and wellbeing. Find out more about these initiatives at farmerhealth.org.au

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NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FARMER HEALTH

Flood Response Support for Victorian Farmers

Boosting mental health and wellbeing for flood affected farmers, farm workers and farming families

#BuildingFarmSpirit

farmerhealth.org.au/buildingfarmspirit

Technical information and decision-making support

Agriculture Victoria is working with Victorian farmers and industry to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters (including floods and storms) through delivery of technical information and decision-making support services to help farm business recovery, including:

- grazing, cropping and pasture management
- irrigation and horticulture system rehabilitation
- soil erosion management
- land management
- animal health and nutrition
- farm mapping and planning
- water quality
- weed management.

More information is available from Agriculture Victoria's Agriculture Recovery Team on 0427 694 185 or at recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Financial and practical support

Financial support

Whether you are a resident, business owner, farmer or primary producer, support with managing your finances is available to you.

See our Flood Hub for more information.

Rural Financial Counselling Service

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) is available to assist primary producers to understand and apply for flood and storm support. Primary Producers can contact their local RFCS on 1300 771 741.

More information is available at Rural Finance by calling 1800 260 425 or visiting the website at ruralfinance.com.au

Emergency Recovery Victoria's structural assessments

Homeowners, small business owners and not-for-profit property owners can register for an all-hazard structural assessment if eligible properties with structures have been damaged or destroyed by floods. Register at: vic.gov.au/register-structural-assessment-october-2022-floods

Business support

Murrindindi Business e-Newsletter

If you operate a business in Murrindindi Shire and have not done so yet, you can register for the Murrindindi Business e-Newsletter on our website: murrindindi.vic.gov.au/Your-Business

Business Recovery Advisory Service

The Business Recovery Advisory Service has now replaced the previous Business Relief Service. The new service offers access to support services including financial counselling and business coaching, and helps businesses identify immediate and long-term needs to ensure business continuity and resilience. Visit the Business Victoria website for details and to register your interest: business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs

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Partners in Wellbeing

Small Business Program

Partners in Wellbeing offer support to business owners, their families and employees affected by the floods in Victoria.

The program is funded by Small Business Victoria, and offers:

- consultation on supporting mental health and wellbeing within the workplace
- individual coaching or counselling to support people's resilience in managing stress, anxiety or other wellbeing concerns
- group training sessions and/or presentations on mental health and wellbeing. These sessions can be run within businesses and/or community settings

You can access this program by calling the Flood Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760.

Partners in Wellbeing Helpline

Sole traders, business owners and their employees can continue to call the Partners in Wellbeing Helpline on **1300 375 330** for free and confidential advice, available seven days a week.

Trained financial counsellors, business advisers and wellbeing coaches are available to provide confidential one-on-one support. The Partners in Wellbeing program will also include embedded community mental health and wellbeing services.

Business Groups Flood Recovery Grants

Grants of \$20,000 and \$50,000 are available for eligible business groups. Funds can be used by chambers of commerce, trader groups, industry associations and more to deliver locally led projects to support flood-affected small businesses recover and thrive. Find out more about these grants on the Business Victoria website:

business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs

Applications close 31 October.

Local updates

Acheron

Bank stabilisation works along the Goulburn River at Breakaway Bridge in Acheron are now complete.

There have been 1900 tonnes of rock used to establish a rock wall (rip-rap) along 120 metres of damaged riverbank.

These works were conducted to protect the road reserve and riverbank by preventing further erosion of the northern riverbank.

This \$170,000 project is fully-funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Hydrographic surveyors will commence survey work of the riverbed around Breakaway Bridge from the week starting 2 October. The information gathered from this study will inform the future options for the bridge.

Council engaged specialist consultants to survey the riverbed adjacent to the bridge, to assess the current condition of the bridge. This is the last piece of information we require to finalise the engineering report and determine possible solutions for the future of Breakaway Bridge.



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General news updates

Forestry transition program

Grants are available to help native timber businesses and communities to transition ahead of native timber harvesting ending on 1 January 2024.

Victorian Forestry Worker Support Program

The Victorian Government recently announced an increase in worker top-up payments from up to \$120,000 to \$150,000 and extra payments to workers over 45 years of age. The wider forestry sector - including firewood sellers, guitar makers, seed collectors and other Forest Produce Licensees will be eligible for the expanded Worker Support Payments, and redundant equipment compensation, plus payments for undersupplied timber, and a one-off hardship payment.

Harvest and Haulage Support Package

Available for forest contractors in September, which will include contract and equipment compensation and worker redundancy payments.

Timber Innovation Grants:

Providing native timber industry businesses funds to explore, invest and implement new opportunities. Harvest and haulage sub-contractors, chip truck drivers and other businesses heavily dependent on the native timber industry, will be eligible for the next round of the Timber Innovation Grants – expected to reopen in late September.

Forestry Transition Fund

Grants of up to \$1 million and wage subsidies of \$20,000 per native timber worker are available. The first round is now open.

Sawmill Voluntary Transition Package

Payments for eligible sawmills to cease purchasing sawlogs under a Timber Sale Agreement or Forest Produce Licence from Victorian State forests prior to 1 January 2024 and surrender their Timber Sale Agreement.



For more information about the forestry transition program and to apply, visit the DEECA website: deeca.vic.gov.au/forestry/grants

Weed management

After natural disasters such as fire or flood, new weeds may appear that have previously not been in the area. Following the October 2022 floods, Bathurst Burr, Hemlock and Thorn Apple, weeds not common in our district, have all been reported.

As we enter Spring and move towards Summer, weeds will take off with the warmer weather. Landholders are urged to remain vigilant about what weeds are growing on their land, including any grazing paddocks. Many species of weed have been declared as noxious and can be poisonous to animals and humans.

If you notice 'unfamiliar' weeds appearing in your patch, reach out to neighbours, Council, Upper Goulburn Landcare Network (UGLN) or your local Landcare group, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Department Agriculture or any agency or person that may be able to assist with identification and treatment methods.

Check out the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority field guide 'Weeds of the Goulburn Broken' to assist in the identification and treatment of common land and aquatic weed species.
https://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au/publications/published_documents/pest_plants_and_animals

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Did you know that the UGLN has an incentive to assist landholders with weed control?

A 50% subsidy is available for herbicide costs, with up to \$300 redeemable in the current financial year. This subsidy applies to the control of specific weeds: Blackberry, Gorse, Chilean Needle Grass, Cape and English Broom, Serrated Tussock, Japanese Honeysuckle, Holly, and Briar Rose. Contact UGLN Facilitator Chris Cobern on 0413 855 490 or email ugln.projects@ugln.net to find out more about this program and eligibility criteria.

Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)

Declared noxious weed

Hemlock is a declared Noxious weed which is known to spread after floods. All parts of Hemlock are poisonous to humans and livestock. It can reduce milk yields and taint milk produced.

An erect annual/biennial hairless herb 2 to 2.5 metres tall with a deep tap root. Tall green stems (hollow) with light purple spots that emit an offensive odour when crushed. Large alternate fern like leaves with many small white, cream, or light pink flowers in umbrella shaped groups at end of stems. Usually growing in seasonally moist to damp areas.

Hemlock is spread by seed carried in water, wind, contaminated soil, machinery, farm produce such as hay or silage. It can be controlled by hand pulling or herbicide. Individual plants can be hand pulled but wearing protective gloves is recommended to avoid reaction to toxins in the plant. Plant residues can remain poisonous, so removal of plant matter is important.



Bathurst Burr (*Xanthium spinosum*)

Declared noxious weed

Bathurst Burr is a declared Noxious weed which is known to spread after floods. The burrs from this plant can contaminate wool, and spikes can damage the feet of stock.

An annual erect herb with many branches, usually 30 to 60 centimetres tall. Leaves are shiny dark green above and pale green and downy underneath. Leaves are alternate and clasp the stem. Prominent central vein. Greenish yellow stems and covered in fine hairs. Sharp golden spikes to 2.5 centimetres shoot from the base of leaves. Fruit is a brown/straw coloured burr 1 to 1.5 centimetres long covered with small hooks.

Spread by seed carried in water, farm produce such as grain and fodder, seed eaten and carried by birds and animals including stock. Can be controlled by hand pulling, herbicide or cultivation prior to flowering. The optimal time for treatment is between October and April.



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Thorn Apple (*Datura spp.*)

Thorn Apple is a declared noxious weed that has been reported in Molesworth since the floods. All parts of the plant are poisonous to humans and some livestock.

An erect annual or perennial up to 1.5 metres tall, Thorn Apple has white trumpet shaped flowers in Spring and Summer. Dark green alternate leaves are either oval or triangular with wavy edges. Green stems are erect, branching and hairy, sometimes with a purple tinge. Spherical, spiky capsule shaped fruit, approximately 2 to 5 centimetres in diameter.

Tolerant of waterlogging and drought usually found in open warm situations on fertile soils. Can be controlled by hand pulling or herbicide. Individual plants can be hand pulled but wearing protective gloves is recommended.

Below: Thorn apple fruit



Above: Thorn apple flower

What do you want to see in future editions?

Are you finding this newsletter helpful? Is there anything we are missing in these updates? Are there other ways you would like to receive recovery updates from us? Let us know by emailing communications@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

We also encourage you to share your story with us. We would like to know how you have been impacted, how you are coping in recovering from the floods and if you have any ideas that might be helpful for other people in our communities.

Murrindindi Shire Council Flood Recovery Team
Murrindindi Shire Council
28 Perkins Street, Alexandra, Victoria 3714
(03) 5772 0333 | customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

The Murrindindi Shire Flood Recovery Newsletter is produced by Murrindindi Shire Council in collaboration with partner Councils, agencies and organisations. Murrindindi Shire Council is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments to support flood recovery activities.

Stay informed with the latest flood and weather updates



During the floods, it's important to keep informed about weather patterns, water levels, and emergency information.

Know who to call

Floods and storms response is managed by the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) with support from Emergency Management Victoria (EMV). VICSES provides resources about what to do before, during, and after floods and storms, with information specific to Murrindindi Shire.

In a flood or storm emergency, call VICSES on 132 500. If life threatening, call 000.

Listen to emergency broadcasters

ABC Goulburn Murray and UGFM – Radio Murrindindi are your local emergency broadcasters. During an emergency, UGFM has automatic backup power generators at all transmitters except Flowerdale and Kinglake.

Tune into ABC Goulburn Murray online or on air:

- Eildon 98.1 FM

Tune into UGFM – Radio Murrindindi online or on air:

- Alexandra/Eildon 106.9 FM
- Flowerdale/Hazeldene 98.9 FM
- Kinglake Ranges 94.5 FM
- Marysville/Lake Mountain 98.5 FM
- Yea/Highlands 88.9 FM



Check the latest weather, warnings and advice

The Bureau of Meteorology has a summary of weather warnings for Victoria: bom.gov.au

Monitor warnings and advice through the VicEmergency app, emergency.vic.gov.au and hotline on 1800 226 226.

Keep an eye on the water levels

Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) manages water-related services and irrigation in northern Victoria. GMW provides detailed information about how water storage is managed, how much water is released from Lake Eildon and the Goulburn Weir, and advice about floods, including updates about specific water storages and rivers, information about dam safety, and what to do when you see changes in water quality.