



newsletter

AUGUST 2020

Welcome! *With clean-up well & truly underway, we are now focusing our efforts on the next phase of recovery from the bushfires and drought that devastated our community.*

It's always great to see real progress in recovery and our local efforts will soon reach another positive milestone. Laing O'Rourke are on target to complete the formal clean-up of all registered properties. This is fantastic news for the community and an important step in the recovery process.

On another positive note, several recovery projects have recently been completed, with the Willawarrin Hall renovations, and the installation of three new flag poles at the War Memorial in Bellbrook, brightening the villages.

While we continue to step forward

as a community, we remain mindful that it is still a tough time for many residents, particularly with the cumulative effects of multiple crises including COVID-19.

It is important, now more than ever, that we keep connected and support one another. This month, the Recovery Team will be releasing a wonderful program of free activities that residents can participate in between now and the end of the year.

There is a broad range of activities and workshops that Council hopes will appeal to a broad range of interests. I encourage you to pick up a brochure and get involved in one (or all) of the events.



Finally, with the financial support of the State Government, a Recovery Hub has been established in Elbow Street, West Kempsey, just next to Service NSW.

Council, NSW Health, Department of Primary Services and St Vincent de Paul will all be located at the Hub, ready to assist the community with their recovery needs. The Hub is open five days a week..

This service is in addition to our usual Mobile Recovery team, which continues to regularly visit Willawarrin and Bellbrook.

Take Care.

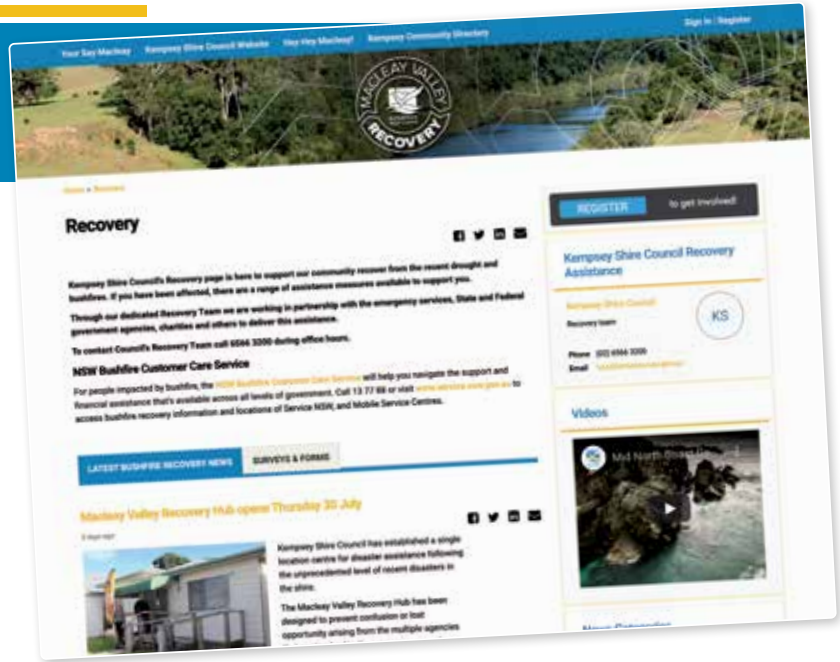
Jo McGoldrick
Coordinator
Recovery



NEW RECOVERY WEBSITE

We have pulled together a new site to keep our community aware of news and updates during our recovery. You can find it on the Your Say Macleay site.

yoursay.macleay.nsw.gov.au/RECOVERY



JANET SHARES HER STORY

Driving up the track to Janet Berechree's house, it's surrounded by lush greenery, though there are still signs of what was a completely charred landscape.

Then the canopy opens to the top of Mungay Creek mountain with 360 degree views of the valley and it is obvious why Janet calls it home.

Among the ashes of where her home was once standing, Janet recalls the events of 8 November and its aftermath - a day that she will never forget.

"I was told my home could not be saved as the firefighters couldn't reach it in time," Janet said.

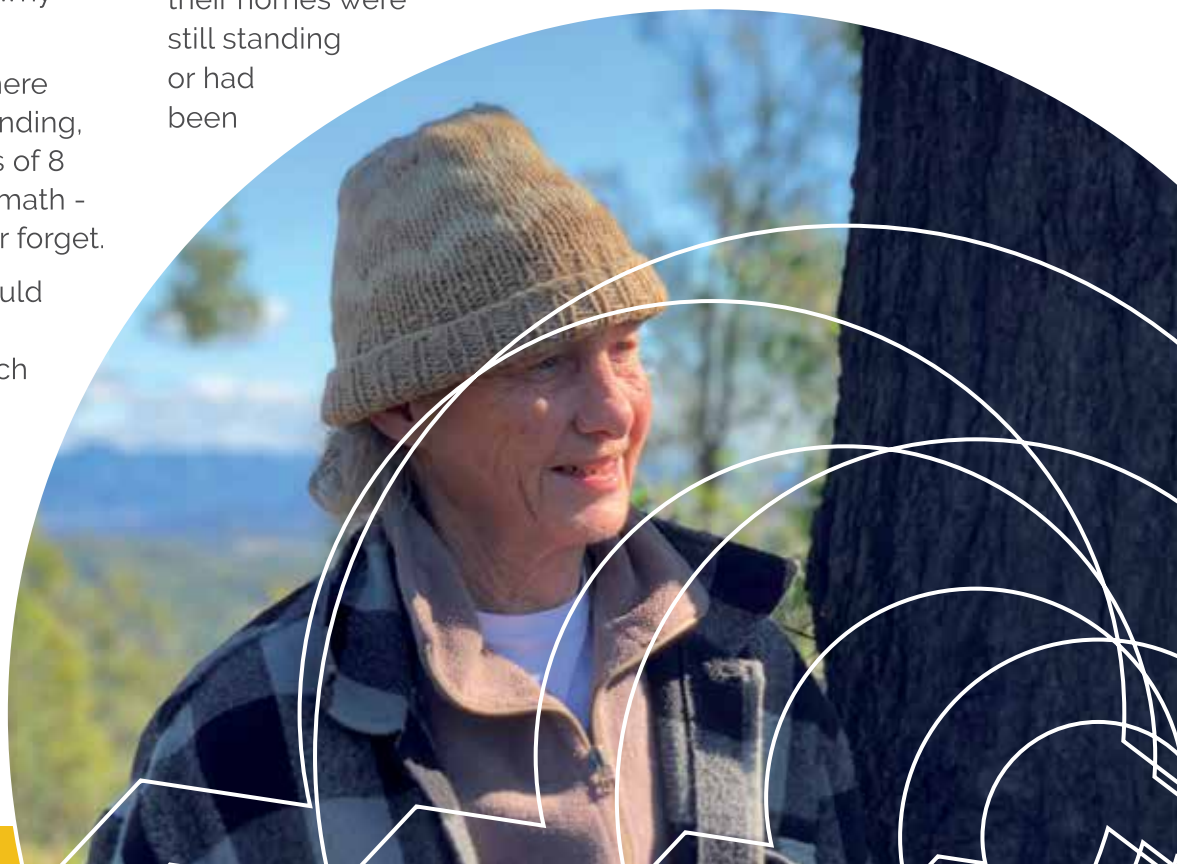
They are not words you ever want to hear in a bushfire, but in the true quintessential Australian spirit Janet began to help save her neighbours' homes.

As her house burned to the ground, like many others in the community, she and her neighbours extinguished spot fires. They made cups of tea and delivered food hampers.

And when those same people were asked by other neighbours to find out whether their homes were still standing or had been

'flattened' by the fire, they had to make the difficult phone call to tell them what had happened.

Janet has called Mungay Creek home for seven years, after one of her neighbours, a former colleague, told her about a block of land that was for sale.



BUSHFIRE RECOVERY COMMUNITY GRANTS

ADVISORY PANEL

Council has allocated \$200,000 from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency funding towards a Bushfire Recovery Community Grants Program.

The program will award grants of up to \$20,000 to support new or existing projects or

events that directly help the community with its recovery from the 2019 bushfires.

Council will soon be inviting the community to apply for these grants, so be sure to keep an eye out on the Recovery Page for further details.

Nine community members have been selected to join Council's Bushfire Recovery Community Grants Advisory Panel.

Residents Kahill Kelly-Marshall, Karen Anderson, Susan Ramke, Shari Knox, Shirley Smart, Janet Berechree, Cynthia Younie, Alexandra Wyatt and Arthur Bain will make up the panel.

Panel members will attend meetings, assess grant applications Council receives under the program and make recommendations to which projects should receive funding.

She lived in a three-bay shed until she could start building her home.

"Every time I had saved a few thousand dollars I would get the plumber up to put on the bathroom, and the next time I had money I would add something else," she said.

"I finally had got the house to the point where it was finished and where it should have been before the fire."

Three days before November 8, Janet knew the fire was coming.

Janet loaded the car with everything she could in two trips as the fire began creeping up the hill.

"It was horrible knowing my home was burning but there was nothing they could do, and I had to get out and help other people.

"I learned how to back burn really quick."

When she was able to come back to her home, she was lost for words as nothing could prepare her for what was left.



To read the full story go to
Council's Recovery website
yoursay.macleay.nsw.gov.au/RECOVERY

WILLAWARRIN PUB SERVES UP SUPPORT

Bushfire recovery is not something that is usually listed in the publican's how-to manual.

But when the bushfires devastated their backyard, Willawarrin Hotel publicans Karen and Gordon Anderson stepped up to help their community.

"We just followed our heart, it's our community, we didn't think about what we were doing, we just did what we had to do," Karen said.

And that's exactly what they have been doing ever since 8 November, providing beds, meals, comfort, hugs and liaising with Kempsey Shire Council to link support agencies with people in their community.

Standing on her front step overlooking her property that was once burned, Karen recalls what happened the day the fires hit.

She had been making dessert at home to be served in the bistro while Gordon was working behind the bar.

"We had been keeping in contact all day about the fires, and were watching the app, before I rang Gordon to let him know that there was an evacuation order for Bellbrook," Karen said.

Then the fire was at Rosebud and in a matter of moments it

had reached Kyuna Track on the other side of Willawarrin. At that stage, the police had arrived to inform people to evacuate.

Karen loaded the dogs and trailer and took them to town. Two more trips saw them move horses to the saleyards.

"We spent the night in Kempsey not knowing what was left, I will never forget that feeling," Karen said.

The next day, their main focus was to open the pub to help people they knew needed assistance.

"When we got through and we knew our house was still standing, we knew that was the least of our worries," she said. They lost cattle in the fires as well as 3km of fencing and fodder.

When they got to Willawarrin, the pair were met with devastation.

"People were congregating around the pub, some of them had lost their homes and we knew we had to feed them," she said.

"We realised the whole village had no power, no form of communication to the outside world and we didn't know the whereabouts of some of our residents.

"We started a list of names of people we knew were okay but it was a desperate situation that we needed to change."



Read the full story on Council's Recovery website
yoursay.macleay.nsw.gov.au/RECOVERY

WILLAWARRIN HALL RECEIVES MUCH NEEDED UPGRADE

It has held weddings, funerals and market days as well as being home to the town's library – and now the Willawarrin community hall is reopening its doors after some much-needed renovations.

The community hall, the heart of Willawarrin and a vital

resource in the bushfire evacuation and recovery, reopened this month and the hall's treasurer and librarian Maudie Reid could not be happier.

"The hall really is the heart of the community, it was the one-stop shop during the bushfires where people could come and get help, food parcels and clothes or a cup of tea," Maudie said.

Maudie thanked Council for the renovations on the hall, who employed local company Osborne and Dowling Building Contractors to complete the work.

She said the hall's committee had started to fund raise for the renovations selling raffle tickets and holding market days before the Council announced the welcome funding grant.

"It would have taken us years to save up enough money, so we think it's wonderful the Council has helped get this community back on track so we can keep delivering services at the hall," Maudie said.

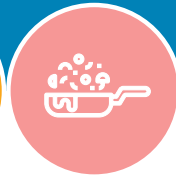
"We used the money the committee raised to buy a ride on mower to maintain the hall's grounds."

The hall was renovated through the National Bushfire Recovery Agency funding, which saw the replacement of damaged external timber and down pipes, fixing the window's flashings and repainting of the exterior.



Don't miss
the next issue
for what is
happening in
Bellbrook!

FREE ACTIVITIES - STENGTH, SUPPORT & COMMUNITY



The events of the last twelve months have demonstrated that, as a community, we are stronger together. To celebrate this strength, a program of free activities has been developed to foster resilience, preparedness and a sense of connectedness across the Valley.

'Strength, support and community' is a program of practical workshops, information sessions and wellness activities. It has been designed to build resilience and

preparedness while getting to know our neighbours. Come along & get involved!

Activities include:

- yoga
- farm resilience
- tree planting
- first aid
- cooking classes
- boot camp
- tourism workshops
- and much more.

Residents of the Kempsey Shire can register for one, five or all of the activities for free. Get involved, meet new people, and be reminded of just how great our Macleay Valley is to call home. Places are limited so be sure to register early to avoid missing out.

Find out what's on offer and register your interest online on Council's Recovery website
yoursay.macleay.nsw.gov.au/RECOVERY



RATES RELIEF FOR BUSHFIRE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

The NSW Government has announced it will fund a full year of council rates for anyone who has lost their home or small business in the recent bushfires.

In February, the NSW Government announced it was funding six months of council rate relief. This has now been extended for a further six months.

Council rate relief, already paid out, covers rates notices for Quarter 3 (January – March) and Quarter 4 (April – June) for 2019-20. The six-month extension will cover rates notices for Quarter 1 (July – September) and Quarter 2 (October – December) of 2020-21.

The relief package covers the land rates component and fixed service charges, such as

waste, sewerage and water, where the amount is included on the council rates notice. Water charges are paid where it is a council-owned water utility.

Any eligible ratepayer who has already paid their rates will receive an automatic credit against their account or can speak with their council regarding a refund.

HIGH TEA IN WILLAWARRIN

Upriver residents were treated to a free high tea in Willawarrin Hall in July.

The event gave residents the opportunity to enjoy a delicious morning tea, check out the newly revamped hall and chat about their recovery journey with other residents and Council staff.



CONNECTING TO THE ELECTRICITY NETWORK

If power supply connection to your home or business was damaged or destroyed by bushfire, you should contact an appropriately qualified electrical contractor to help you through the reconnection process.

Essential Energy is waiving the normal connection fee and

offering customers, whose property was affected by fire, a rebate towards the cost of restoring service mains.

A list of Accredited Service Providers (ASPs) is available on the Energy NSW website (energysaver.nsw.gov.au)

If you or your ASP need technical information about connecting to the electricity network, contact Essential Energy on 13 23 91.

Further information is available at essentialenergy.com.au/our-network/connecting-to-the-network

WITTITRIN OUTREACH

The mobile recovery team which consists of Council and various support agencies and charitable organisations visited the Fire Shed at Wittitrin in June to provide assistance and referrals to those impacted by bushfire and drought.



P. 02 6566 3200 F. 02 6566 3205 E. ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au
Recovery Hub - 75 Elbow Street (PO Box 3078) West Kempsey NSW 2440
yoursay.macleay.nsw.gov.au/RECOVERY

