

November 2021 Edition

► MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

What a busy month October proved to be with the continued clean-up of our roadsides, the free firewood trial, online Community Session and our Case Support Officers visiting and supporting many residents who have been directly affected by the storm event. Council Officers have also had two storm event debriefs involving many agencies so that we could review and record the response to the event – what worked well and what we need to do differently next time.

To top it all off, we had another storm come through on the 29th which we are now working to clean up and assist impacted households and businesses. Our thoughts go out to everyone impacted. We understand just how traumatic these storm events have been. We have invited Dr Rob Gordon to meet with us on Thursday 25th November to share his insights on how to psychologically recover from this trauma. We encourage you to come along and bring your neighbours and friends.

The Free Firewood Trial was very successful with more than 160m³ provided to 103 Hepburn residents. The satisfaction survey found that 95% would book again but there were several comments that the wood pieces are large and that some dirt and mulch was included in the load (particularly from the Trentham Transfer Station). The firewood is being provided free of charge and due to the wet weather, the collection has resulted in some wood being smeared with mud, which dries to dirt. Unfortunately, this has been unavoidable and some loads of free firewood will have dirt and mulch contamination. As it is green wood, it should dry for next year. Some logs will need to be further split to fit some fireplaces.

The Community Group firewood program was rolled out across the Shire in October with plenty of wood to go around. We are delighted that so many community groups have offered to further split the wood and distribute to residents who are unable to collect from the Transfer Stations. This is yet another demonstration of how generous our community is.

The roadside clean-up program is well advanced, with a second round of arborist inspections completed to identify any remaining hazards on our Council roadsides. The final stage of clean-up is under way and we had planned to have these trees/branches cleared by Christmas (COVID and weather permitting). This may be compromised due to the clean up from the 29th October storm. We thank everyone, especially the local residents, for your patience during this clean-up operation and look forward to restoring the roads back to their pre-existing condition once the clean-up is complete.

A reminder that if you'd like to talk with one of our Storm Recovery team, please call Council on 5348 2306 and keep an eye out for our Community Recovery team who will be out and about in November to see you in person.

Cr Lesley Hewitt, Mayor

► MEET THE TEAM



James Wicker

James Wicker is the Storm Recovery Lead, working closely with Matthew Allan-Grant and Jackie Mitchell (Storm Recovery Coordinator).

James has been with Council at the Daylesford Depot for eight years, operating a variety of machinery. He is a Hepburn Shire local and grew up in Trentham.

He has been with the Storm Recovery Team from the start of the storm event, taking control of the setup and operation on the stack site and organising contractor packages alongside Jackie. He recognises the challenges he has faced while in this role, but has enjoyed finding solutions for them.



Matthew Allan-Grant

Matthew Allan-Grant is the Surveillance Officer, working closely with James. Far from the cut and thrust of heavy machinery, Matthew began his working life as a chef and finished that part of his career running commercial kitchens for airlines. After a stint as a primary carer for his children, Matthew brought his family to the Hepburn Shire for a tree-change, looking to work outdoors. He obtained

some heavy machinery tickets and worked on a job with Council. Now, he is overseeing the day-to-day operations of contractors and staff on the timber processing, the community firewood distribution and the transportation of timber between the two. He will follow up service requests with storm related issues and liaise with the public on storm related matters.

► STORM CLEAN UP

Storm clean-up works from the June storm are progressing well with all initial works now completed, other than a small amount of ongoing work around the Creswick and Dean areas. We have had arborists through to inspect our roads and those reports are now completed.

We are now heading into secondary works which is mostly hangers and a few tree removals. This has now been compounded with the second storm event on the 29th October and at the time of writing, we have yet to understand the full extent of the clean-up. There is likely to be some road restoration works required in the coming months on some of our more heavily storm-damaged roads.

► CENTRAL HIGHLANDS RURAL HEALTH: A PARTNER IN STORM RECOVERY

Since early August, Central Highlands Rural Health (CHRH) Storm Recovery Support Workers, Michelle and Natasha have been working with residents affected by the June storm.

Michelle and Natasha are both experienced social workers and are supporting people in their recovery process. This involves practical and emotional support as people adapt to life with the destruction. The processes of resuming life in the post-storm world are providing a range of challenges for individuals and groups, from anxiety associated with wind to frustrations in navigating the multitude of systems involved in the recovery.

While emotional recovery needs may change as time moves on, it is important to recognise that people may experience storm-related distress or the need for psycho-social assistance many months down the track.

If you or someone you know may benefit from additional support related to the storm you can contact Central Highlands Rural Health in Daylesford on 5321 6550 and ask to speak with an Access Worker about psycho-social support. This is a free service available to any Hepburn Shire resident affected by the storm.



► FIREWOOD TRIAL

Community free firewood trials began on Monday 11 October at Trentham and continued the following two days at Creswick and Daylesford. These trials were a replacement of the earlier events that had to be cancelled due to Covid restrictions.

It was heartening to see that there was a consistent take-up of the offer by 75% of the people who booked at all three sites. Over those three days, Council distributed a total of 164 cubic metres of wood and participating residents averaged 1.6 cubic metres each.

We send a big thank you to those who collected firewood and we look forward to ongoing distribution. After a thorough review of the trial process, we have opened bookings on Eventbrite and encourage everybody who is able, to access this opportunity.

We plan to tighten timelines so we can get more wood distributed more efficiently to as many Hepburn Shire residents as possible. You can book for your free 2 cubic metres of firewood via Council's website: www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/firewood



► COMMUNITY SESSION

- A Community Information Session was held via Zoom on Thursday 14 October.
- The meeting was hosted by BRV in association with Hepburn Shire Council. Representatives from Council, BRV, DELWP, Telstra, Powercor, Parks Victoria, CFA and SES also joined the call.
- Agencies delivered reviews of the storm, the clean-up, their learnings and their follow up actions.
- This was a chance for residents to have their say, ask questions of the agencies and to share their concerns and queries following the storm event. The Storm Recovery Team hope to meet and engage with the community through in-person events in the coming weeks.

► FREE GREEN WASTE DISPOSAL

Throughout November Council offers residents free green waste disposal at our three transfer stations in Creswick, Daylesford and Trentham. This is to help you get your property ready for the fire danger period.

Please ensure that green waste is free of noxious weeds and is separated from other items. Visitors to the transfer stations must comply with COVID safety requirements. Free green waste disposal is for households only and excludes commercial quantities of waste.

Transfer stations are open during COVID lockdowns for essential waste disposal, which includes for bushfire preparation. For details on transfer station opening hours visit Council's website: www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/transfer-stations. Please note that transfer stations will not be receiving green waste during firewood collection days.

► TRAUMA RECOVERY PSYCHOLOGIST

The Storm Recovery Team is hosting a community event on 25th November with clinical psychologist, Dr Rob Gordon Ph.D. This is a great chance to come together for a BBQ and to hear some straight-forward stories and advice about managing a wide array of post-traumatic events and to ask questions.

Rob has 40 years' experience working with survivors of traumatic events, disasters and work-related critical incidents. He has consulted to many government departments and agencies following emergencies and traumatic events and worked with disaster-affected communities in Australia and New Zealand.

We urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to hear from and chat with an expert.

Trentham Mechanics Institute
66 High Street, Trentham
Thursday 25 November
6 - 8.30pm

Bookings can be made via Council's website: www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/storm-update

► MENTAL WELLBEING

It is normal to experience a range of physical, mental, emotional and behavioural reactions following an emergency or distressing event. It is important people look after their mental health and that of their friends, family and neighbours. Elderly or isolated people, and those who have a pre-existing mental illness, history of trauma or recent bereavement may need extra support during an emergency. If you are feeling overwhelmed and finding it difficult to cope, reach out for help from friends and family or contact the services listed below. If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one, call Lifeline 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

Or contact:

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 offers free (even from a mobile) 24/7 support by qualified counsellors for young people aged 5 to 25 – also available via webchat and email, visit kidshelpline.com.au/
- Beyond Blue has trained counsellors available to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 512 348 and an online chat service on their website under the 'I need support now' tab: www.beyondblue.org.au
- Parentline 13 22 89 is a phone service for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old offering confidential and anonymous counselling and support on parenting issues
- Your regular GP or health centre
- Family and friends
- Better Health Channel (betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- If you are in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact emergency services on 000.

The way you react to an emergency, including your mental and emotional response, and the time it takes to recover, depends on many things. This includes the amount of support available, other stressors being experienced, or previous traumatic experiences. Recovery will be complex and unique to your own circumstance.

► FINANCIAL DISASTER RELIEF

If you have lost income as a direct result of the June 2021 Victorian storms and floods, a Government Disaster Recovery Allowance may be available.

In Hepburn Shire, you have until 31 May 2022 to make a claim. It is a short-term payment of \$1000 per adult and \$400 per child to help you if a declared disaster directly affects your income. You can get it for a maximum of 13 weeks from the date you started losing income as a direct result of the Victorian storms and floods in June 2021. DRA is a taxable payment. You can ask to have voluntary tax withheld from your payments.

Check eligibility at the Victorian government's Storm and Flood pages.

► FARM BUSINESS ESSENTIALS

Agriculture Victoria is presenting the Farm Business Essentials webinar series covering Planning, Budgeting, and Profits: Making the Most Of Your Success, and Succession Planning.

The remaining two webinars provide insights into the essential skills required to operate a profitable farm business.

- Profits - Put your success to work – Wed. 24 November 2021, 7.30 – 8.30pm
- Succession Planning – Wed. 8 Dec. 2021, 7.30 – 9pm

For more information and to book in, visit the Department of Ag website, Farm Business Essential Webinar.

► USEFUL LINKS

Get help to stabilise
your finances,
reduce stress
& allow you to focus
on other areas



**Storm and Flood
Recovery Hotline
1800 560 760**

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
(excluding public holidays)



Central Highlands Rural Health

<http://www.chrh.org.au/>

(03) 5321 6500

Send Message
info@chrh.org.au

► IN THE SPOTLIGHT - CLEM NEMETH

Two years ago, Clem Nemeth decided to move out of a warehouse into the open air. Lured by an advertisement to work as a Transfer Station Attendant with the Hepburn Shire Council, Clem relishes her new life outdoors in some of the most stunning scenery that Victoria has to offer.

Based mostly at Daylesford, Clem works in, 'This amazing environment.'

From a role that mostly involved manual handling of warehouse goods, she now has a loader and a forklift licence and claims the loader to be her favourite. 'Training took four days,' she says, 'and I was very nervous, but I picked it up quickly. I already had a Medium Rigid licence, so it wasn't such a big stretch. We use the loader to push down the waste in the bins and to push up the green waste. It's very slow, but powerful and you can get a lot done quickly as it's so efficient.'

Clem enjoys the customer service aspect of her job; interacting with people. It is quite social. Though she is the one of two women in a team of seven or eight, she's heard a whisper that there will be another casual arriving soon.

At her home in Ballarat, Clem missed the severity of the storm event in June but the impact of the storm was not lost on her when she returned to work that week. As she approached Daylesford from Ballarat, the roads were closed and there were many barricades. 'It was basically Enter at your own risk. I was surprised at the amount of damage that was done to the forest and it was quickly obvious why I was told to drive carefully, even though the roads were all cleared. I got to work at the Trentham Transfer Station and there were great holes in the view of the forest over the road. It was amazing, looking out the front gate at how the forest had changed with the huge trees that fell down.'

The team have been busy with vast amounts of green waste because of the storm and the huge amount of interest in the free firewood.

Say hi if you see her; she loves this friendly community.

