

Welcome to a massive May update...for those new to join us we're so glad you're here!

PROGRESS...

I've been thinking A LOT about this word recently, both in terms of the thinking we do in our own heads every day, let alone the things that happen externally. This month I've been genuinely struck by what's being achieved. It's always a highlight to receive your calls and updates and always makes me smile when I'm on the road to glimpse little hints of what's coming!

...POSSIBLE

While I don't believe for one second my simple shout outs come close to capturing the efforts of those who've played such a huge role in helping us grow, it has prompted me to expose some of the special achievements and joys to witness.

- Lithgow Workies Club - Highly Commended in the 2021 Club and Community Awards for Bushfire Support
- The team at Harvey Norman Lithgow for their continuing support of residents
- Residents who have moved in (hoorah!) and for those yet to, it will be here soon (#onestepatatime)
- To the community meetings occurring and to see the difference you're making
- Some new faces of support. Meet the crew around you and read what they do
- The Big Bank with a big cheque \$\$
- Eye spy some steam in the sky!

If you've got any others for me, I'd love to hear them!



On May 18-19, we lit up the Miners Lantern on the Great Western Highway orange in support of WOW Day and the hard-working volunteers of the NSW State Emergency Service.

The Miner's Lantern joined the Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Stadium Australia and another 20 locations across the state in being illuminated in support of the NSW SES.

The dates coincided with National Volunteer Week (17-23 May), which is specially designed to thank **everyone** who gives up their time so generously to help out, support and keep the community safe.

If you didn't take a moment to pat yourself on the back for what you've done to help others and to express your gratitude to the incredible selfless individuals who devote their time to helping people (do it now!). Every act makes a difference and yours are what makes our communities what they are.

Until next time

Rachel Nicoll - Community Recovery Officer (0419 100 085).



NEWS & UPDATES

National Recovery and Resilience Agency

On Wednesday 5 May, the Prime Minister the Hon Scott Morrison launched the National Recovery and Resilience Agency.

The Recovery and Resilience Agency brings together the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency. As a single disaster agency, combining shared experiences of supporting communities recovering from bushfire, floods, drought, as well as the impacts of COVID-19.

From July 1, the Agency will incorporate the disaster risk reduction and recovery functions from the Department of Home Affairs, and Rural Financial Counsellors from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

The new [website \(https://recovery.gov.au/\)](https://recovery.gov.au/) features recovery support for the 2021 eastern Australia storms and floods, Black Summer bushfires, 2019 North Queensland floods, mental health support, and more. You can visit the Recovery Support Officers (RSOs) page to learn about the dedicated liaison network and the support they provide to disaster-affected individuals and communities. You can find each town they're located in and reach out if you're in an area affected by disaster or drought.

The National Recovery and Resilience Agency was established in response to the [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements](#) and is led by the [Hon Shane L Stone AC QC](#).



Research finds expectation challenges with bushfire warnings

Research after the worst fire season in NSW history shows there are challenges around community expectations of bushfire warnings, with many people expecting to receive highly detailed and localised information in near real-time.

Undertaken for the NSW Rural Fire Service the research *Black Summer – how the NSW community responded to the 2019-20 bushfire season* investigated how people across NSW were affected by the bushfires and what actions they took.

The research found that previous experience of bushfire motivated many people to plan and prepare. The extent of the 2019/20 fires and the sheer number of people affected presents opportunities to reach new audiences with bushfire safety information and promote planning and preparation. New initiatives, including fire spread prediction maps and Tourist Leave Zone messages, were found to be effective in communicating risk and motivating people to take protective action during the worst of the conditions. You can find the full report at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/black-summer-nsw-community> and four page briefing paper at <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/95>

Insurers upgrade home fire claims coverage

Major home insurers are updating their terms and conditions to make it easier for homeowners to claim for fire damage.

In the wake of summer bushfires, leading consumer advocate group Choice has campaigned for better fire claim definitions for exclusions on home-and-contents insurance policies.

The Insurance Council of Australia says more than \$2.3 billion was paid out in claims to policyholders following the bushfires. However, Choice maintains a lack of standardised terms among fire insurers meant many policy conditions were unclear and open to misinterpretation.

Read the SMH article at: <https://www.smh.com.au/money/insurance/insurers-upgrade-home-fire-claims-coverage-20210507-p57psz.html>

Staying healthy during a mouse plague

The Ministry of Health has developed a fact sheet titled, "[Staying healthy during a mouse plague](#)", which contains helpful information around health risks, rodent-borne infectious diseases, protecting health and more.

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Factsheet/s/mouse-plague.pdf>

WEBINARS TO WATCH



Green Rebuild Toolkit

Residents are invited to attend (and share!) in a free upcoming webinar series offering information for fire-affected communities to rebuild homes for climate and fire resilience.

The webinars coincide with the launch of Renew's Green Rebuild Toolkit (<http://greenrebuildtoolkit.com/>) a set of online resources, articles, and information to assist fire-affected communities to plan for, retrofit and rebuild their homes.

The webinars will feature experts in the field speaking alongside homeowners who have already rebuilt after fire. There will also be the opportunity for people to connect with architects, designers, and bushfire safety experts in a July series of tailored 'Speed Date a Sustainability Expert' events, and one-on-one consults for those needing further advice. All events and support are free thanks to GlobalGiving.

The topics and dates for the webinars are as follows:

1. [Rebuild first steps](#) | Tuesday 1 June 6-7.30pm
2. [Designing & building for bushfire & climate resilience](#) | Wednesday 2 June 6-7.30pm
3. [Materials & construction for bushfire & climate resilience](#) | Thursday 3 June 6-7.30pm
4. [Home energy setups for bushfire zones & climate resilience](#) | Tuesday 8 June 6-7.30pm
5. [Water storage & fire-resistant landscaping](#) | Wednesday 9 June 6-7.30pm
6. [Retrofitting for fire resistance](#) | Thursday 10 June 6-7.30pm

Register your place at greenrebuildtoolkit.com or contact greenrebuildtoolkit@renew.org.au with any questions.



Igniting Conversation
Building resilience in our communities after bushfires.



Igniting Conversation: Building resilience in our communities

Date and time

Thu., 8 July 2021

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm AEST

Presented by the UNSW Bushfire Research Group in collaboration with UNSW Science, this event brings together experts at the intersection of industry, research, and philanthropy to discuss the ongoing need for research around extreme bushfires and how we can build resilience to protect our most vulnerable communities in the face of unprecedented natural disasters.

HYBRID EVENT

This event will be delivered to a live audience at Frensham School, Mittagong, Southern Highlands, but is also available to watch digitally from anywhere in the world. A recording of the panel discussion will be sent to all registered attendees shortly after the event.

REGISTER at: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/igniting-conversation-building-resilience-in-our-communities-tickets-151403719601>

For event enquiries or to discuss your access requirements, please call the UNSW Canberra Alumni & Engagement Team on 0404 739 723 or email alumni@adfa.edu.au.

HEADS UP



RECOVERY & RESILIENCE EVENT HAVE YOUR SAY

LET US KNOW what you need to help move you closer toward your #goals

On 5-6 December 2020 we were grateful to deliver the Bushfire Recovery & Community Day.

If you missed the event you can catch highlights of it [HERE](#)



Planning is underway for the 2021 version of this event and we want to hear from you! We want to know what we can do to improve on last year's event, what you would like to see and hear about. Please consider taking a few minutes to complete our short questionnaire at: <https://us17.list-manage.com/survey?u=4291a50b41dd0c572d3c82b42&id=bc27c56df0&attribution=false>

We value your thoughts and feedback.

BUSINESS SUPPORT - MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES, TRAINING AND EVENTS

Supporting mental health and wellbeing both throughout adverse events and the road to recovery is an important investment in **you** and **your people**.

The below websites provide a wide range of resources, information and advice for individuals and organisations - all of which are designed to offer simple, practical and, importantly, achievable guidance.

- [Mental health support guides for employees and workplaces during COVID-19](#)
- [Mentally Healthy Workplaces during COVID-19 - medium to large businesses](#)
- [Mentally Healthy Workplaces during COVID-19 - Small business](#)
- [Mentally Healthy Workplaces during COVID-19 - Sole traders](#)
- [Business Connect webinars and events](#)

MENTALLY
HEALTHY
WORK
PLACE
ALLIANCE

Beyond
Blue

Heads up
Better mental health in the workplace



PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY

Planning for emergency is a podcast episode brought to you by Local Land Services talking about emergency management.

Hear from field officers and researchers about making plans and keeping yourself in check. They also talk to a farmer who's using animals as a tool to reduce his fire risk.

Listen at:

<https://anchor.fm/the-big-shift/episodes/Planning-for-an-Emergency-eufeg3>



VINNIES COMMUNITY BUSHFIRE RECOVERY GRANT PROGRAM

Vinnies are now accepting applications for the Vinnies NSW and Canberra / Goulburn Community Bushfire Recovery Grant Program, helping communities on the journey to recovery.

One-off grants of up to \$30,000 are available for organisations in bushfire-affected areas, providing funding for recovery projects that benefit multiple people.

Find out more at:

[Vinnies NSW Community Bushfire Grants - St Vincent de Paul Society - Good Works](#)

RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES

Bushfire Recovery to Community Resilience Mental Health Clinicians

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District are excited to announce a new outreach mental health clinician role serving the Lithgow and the Blue Mountains areas. A parallel role has also been established in the Hawkesbury LGA.



The roles were originally funded to provide mental health support immediately following the 2019 bushfires and have been extended to provide a resource for the community as recovery continues and resilience is built.

Greg Wurth is currently in the Lithgow Blue Mountains role. Greg has close to 20 years of experience in providing mental health care across a wide range of settings and organisations. He is embedded in the Lithgow Community Mental Health Team.

As a local resident of the Blue Mountains, and with a childhood spent in rural and regional areas of NSW, Greg has a lived experience perspective of the challenges faced by communities affected by natural disasters like fire, flood and drought.

This is an exciting and new opportunity for the LHD to develop service pathways and contribute into the outreach and community resilience building space. The role aims to build upon the strong community network of Lithgow and the Blue Mountains to ensure clear communication and coordination across services responding to bushfire and emergency events in the community.

Greg can be reached on 0428 481 412 or by contacting the Lithgow Community Mental Health Centre on 6350 2555 and is always happy to further discuss how he can be of service to the community.

Jamie Perry-Meijer Bushfire Recovery Officer | Department of Primary Industries



Hi Everyone, my name is Jamie Perry-Meijer and I work as a Bushfire Recovery Officer based in Katoomba with the Department of Primary Industries.

My role with the DPI Rural Recovery Support Service is to engage with members of the community who have been impacted by the 2019/2020 bushfires.

I provide individual case management where I am keen to hear about any ongoing or emerging issues people are experiencing as a result of the fires, and to learn what assistance people require to help them with their recovery. I can then link people to any available services, grants or other relevant activities and opportunities that may either be available at this time or which may arise that relate to their particular interests and needs identified.

I will be also be working with our partner recovery agencies and community groups to support the development of projects and activities to help with the ongoing recovery process, as well as initiatives to build resilience in rural communities in the event of future natural disasters. The DPI Rural Recovery Support Service is a **free** service, so please contact me on 0407 910 221 if you would like to have a chat, or by email at jamie.perry-meijer@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES

Well Being Outreach Program

For disaster affected residents in Lithgow, Mid-Western, Hawkesbury & Blue Mountains

Gateway Family Support Services and Wentworth Healthcare are partnering to provide free outreach wellbeing support for residents in Lithgow, Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains. The **Well Being** program sits alongside Gateway's Step by Step Recovery Support Service to provide a comprehensive range of practical, emotional and psychological support to residents affected by the 2019/20 bushfires and the more recent floods.

The **Well Being** workers provide holistic, accessible, person-centred support. The Well Being workers are trained counsellors, who provide a simple and respectful way to help people manage the stress, loss and anxiety that often comes with experiencing disaster events.

There is no need for a referral, no labels and no drawn out waiting period. Well Being workers can travel to residents to meet them in their homes or meet at local community venues. It can be as simple as a chat over a cup of tea, and some support to understand the best ways to care for ourselves as we deal with the ongoing effects of cumulative disasters.

"Our community has been through so much" says Anne Crestani, Manager of the Well Being Project. "We really understand that sometimes people just need to know they're not alone. We provide friendly, non-judgemental, professional support that allows people to navigate their own recovery journey, in their own time at their own pace".

Anne points out that many residents are surprised that they are still dealing with the emotional impacts of the bushfires a year and half later. "It's really tiring for anyone dealing with the effects of the events of the past 18 months. Sometimes just chatting with someone who can normalise the fatigue and other experiences that go along with the recovery journey, can be enormously helpful" says Anne.

If you would like to talk with a **Well Being** worker, contact Megan on 0490 676 269 or email meganw@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au.

For all information on the Being Well program and other media enquiries please contact Anne Crestani on 0499 831 775 or email annec@gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



Alan Henderson
Lithgow Mid Western Wellbeing Worker



Megan Watson
Blue Mountains Clarence Dargan
Wellbeing Worker