

WOOROLOO BUSHFIRE RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

DEC 21 / JAN 22

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE RECOVERY COORDINATOR, GRAHAM SWIFT



The holiday season brought more scorching temperatures and after several recent bushfires, the prospect of rebuilding and what the future holds may be difficult for some residents to think about, and that's very understandable. The process of recovery is a complex, individual journey, so it is important for residents to go at their own pace, knowing support and services are available to them when they need a helping hand.

The Department of Communities and Australian Red Cross are continuing to provide residents with opportunities to connect and access psychosocial services. The recovery teams on the ground are also available to support impacted residents in restoring and prioritising their wellbeing, and I urge them to make use of the resources available.

As has been the case since Recovery efforts commenced, the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring continue to generate an abundance of events and activities that have nurtured connectedness within the impacted communities of Gidgegannup and Woorloo. It is incredibly reassuring to see the level of growth, support and encouragement coming out of the community, this really speaks to the strength of local individuals and groups.

The Department of Communities continues to offer welfare support throughout the recovery process and for as long as it is needed. To access support or for urgent matters email recovery@communities.wa.gov.au or call the Disaster Response Hotline on 1800 032 965.

COMMUNITY IS KEY FOR KAREN

In the aftermath of the destructive Woorloo Bushfire in February 2021, Karen Dore found herself drawn towards a new role within the Shire of Mundaring as Project Officer Community Recovery.

"I had mixed emotions when I was offered the role, but having seen the destruction firsthand, I was eager to be involved in the helping these communities to get back on their feet. I've always been drawn to roles where I can make a real difference to individuals and groups who are in need of assistance, and I instinctively seem to thrive on challenges," she said.

"Nearly 12 months on it's heart-warming to see the new connections and re-connections happening in the Woorloo community, and to also see how these strengthened local networks are aiding their recovery and building their resilience."

Karen has worked in local government community development, engagement and capacity building roles for more than a decade, so it was second nature for her to encourage those impacted by the bushfire to come together and support each other as they recover from the tragedy.

Since April last year Karen has created a dynamic calendar of events and activities to foster involvement and connection, and to encourage community-led initiatives, but she is quick to redirect praises given to her.

"The role has been quite demanding at times but I also have the most wonderful teams to work with, the Shire of Mundaring and the City of Swan, along with (Department of) Communities, Australian Red Cross and DFES," Karen said.

"We have also received incredible support from a number of dedicated community groups and charities, but the real work has come from the community members themselves; in their most difficult time they continue working towards rebuilding physically and emotionally."

Since moving to Western Australia from London, Karen has always been quick to imbed herself in her community. Having strong community connections has been a fundamental part of life for her.

"I feel that giving assistance and being able to call on others for support is a really integral part of feeling at home in and belonging to a community," she said.

When she's not at work Karen thrives on being challenged. Whether attending an incident with the Julimar Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, being on the Toodyay Agricultural Show organising committee, competing as a motorcycle road racing sidecar passenger or attempting to get her 10 acres of garden in shape.



Karen and recovery colleagues from the Australian Red Cross and Department of Communities.

GIFTS, GRATITUDE AND COMMUNITY FESTIVE SPIRIT

The festive spirit was in full swing in Wooroloo and Gidgegannup in the lead up to Christmas. Knowing that the holiday season would be a very different experience this year for many individuals and households, with guidance from recovery agencies, the community rallied with support.

Residents from across the Shire of Mundaring and City of Swan came together on 1 December to write notes of thanks and decorate gratitude trees at the Gidgegannup Community Church and the Wooroloo Hall.

Community members also reached out to those in need outside of their

local area this Christmas by donating dozens of gifts to disadvantaged children, with help from not-for-profit organisations Parky Care, Jacaranda and Dream Builders.

The Department of Communities, supported by the Australian Red Cross, City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring hosted a Christmas morning tea on 17 December at the Gidgegannup Hall where the community came together to distribute Christmas hampers, puddings and gifts to all Wooroloo Bushfire-affected residents.

Department of Communities Recovery Coordinator Jo Reimers said she was in awe of the communal impulse of local groups and individuals to boost connectedness and support within the community.

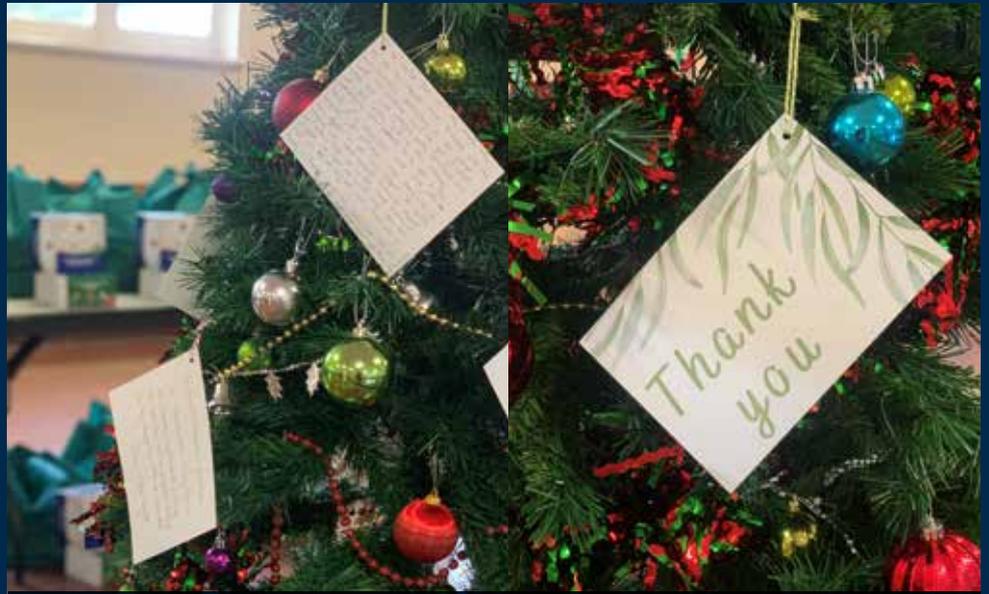
“The idea of using gratitude trees came about from conversations with residents who wanted to focus on optimism, positivity and a way to acknowledge their gratitude,” Jo said.

“Residents saw an opportunity to give back to people who have helped them through difficult times since the February bushfire, and I think we’d all agree that there’s a certain significance in lessening the load and bringing smiles to faces at Christmas.”

Supported by the Department of Communities, Shire of Mundaring and City of Swan recovery teams continue to provide bushfire affected communities with consistent support, largely through locally driven activities and initiatives.



Georgia Marshall, Bushfire Recovery Officer, City of Swan with very happy gift recipients.



Gratitude Trees gave community members an opportunity to give thanks for support received.



Hampers and gift packs ready to be gifted to residents impacted by the Wooroloo bushfire.



Jo Reimers, Bushfire Recovery Coordinator, Dept of Communities and Karen Dore, Bushfire Recovery Officer, Shire of Mundaring assist at the Gratitude event.

GRATEFUL FOR NEW COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Tilden Park resident Eric Warren didn't realise his neighbours were curious about who he was. His property was mostly hidden behind a wall of trees and many newer residents didn't know his house existed until the vegetation was stripped bare by the fire and clean up.

“When I started going to the Gidge weekly morning teas, people told me they had no idea who lived there because they couldn't see my house and I guess they never really saw me either,” Eric said.

“Support from the local governments and other agencies has been really great, I'm not sure I would have connected with people around me like I have if it wasn't for the get-togethers being organised for us to be a part of.”

The Department of Communities continues to host weekly morning teas, working alongside the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring, Australian Red Cross, Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), and several community groups providing opportunities for residents impacted by the Wooroloo bushfire to seek out the complex support they need for their journey to recovery.

Eric retired the day after the Wooroloo bushfire started with a plan to work on his collection of rare 1940s cars, however when his vehicles were lost in the fire this plan came to a sudden halt.



Tilden Park resident Eric Warren lost a collection of antique collectable cars, but says he's grateful to have his home and new friendships. Photo - The Echo News.

Despite losing the shed that stored his precious cars, antique doors and the timber he was using to renovate his home, Eric felt lucky to have his house spared and he happily opted to be a low priority property on the clean-up agenda.

“I put my hand up to be one of the last properties to be cleared. I lost my cars and tools, but I've still got my house and I'm just trying to help others where I can.”

Eric's was one of the last of 135 properties to be cleared in the Residential Clean-up Program and he was thankful to the contractors he dealt with for their patience, guidance and open communication throughout the process.

Reflecting on his journey of recovery from the bushfire, Eric said while there were difficult months where he had a lot on his mind and couldn't get out and interact, there came a point where he wanted to be part of it and make new connections.

“Getting to know new people and being involved in the community has been so valuable for me, and for others, especially at a time when we're all piecing our lives back together in some way,” Eric said.

“I'm grateful for the new connections I've made so far and I'm looking forward to making many more in the community.”

Hosted by the Department of Communities team and supported by the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring, the Gidge weekly morning teas are one of the many community initiatives in place for residents to connect with others and receive ongoing support.

Contact Jo (0432 831 196) or Ioannis (0472 872 453) or email recovery@communities.wa.gov.au for information on upcoming events.



For information about more community recovery activities and events, please visit the [City of Swan](#) and the [Shire of Mundaring](#).

