

WOOROLOO BUSHFIRE RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

FEB 2022

STORY SHARING FOR RECOVERY

Spanning back to the earliest humans, storytelling has been a means of connection and knowledge sharing. Communicating experiences can assist the storyteller in processing life events, find meaning in hardships and foster new bonds through shared experiences.

With the help of a Minderoo grant from the Foundation for WA Museum, curators from the Western Australian Museum (WAM) are giving communities impacted by the Wooroloo bushfire a chance to tell their story through video interviews. A natural disaster of this proportion impacts the whole community as well as everyone involved in response and recovery, and this project is open to anyone who wants to share.

All stories and viewpoints are important and WAM are hoping to preserve a diverse range of community experiences for the future, to help explain what it is like to live through and recover from a major bushfire.

Kylie Elston is one of the curators leading this project and she hopes that giving people a safe and comfortable setting to tell their story will also help them to reflect on their experience in a different way.

"The memory of the events will still be vivid in the minds of those who experienced it, but this might give

individuals a chance to reflect on their personal journey with the benefit of any insights they have come upon in the past year or so since the bushfire," Kylie said.

"One of the crucial elements of the story telling days is that the participants are able to tell the story they want to tell, in their own voice, so we will sit back and let them share."

For many, this may not be the right time or way to share their story. And that's understandable. For those who are ready, the WAM curators will be setting up for story-telling days in both Wooroloo and Gidgegannup in the second week of March, with recovery staff also on hand for support if needed.

Story sharing days will take place in conjunction with weekly recovery morning teas at:

- Gidgegannup Showgrounds on Friday 11 March 2022
- Wooroloo Hall on Tuesday 15 March 2022

People wanting to participate or get further information can contact Kylie Elston at email kylie.elston@museum.wa.gov.au or call 9212 3776.

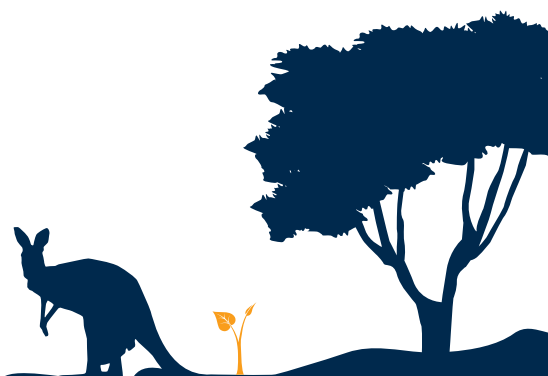
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If you have any feedback or content ideas please contact
wooroloo@dfes.wa.gov.au

WAM WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM





MESSAGE FROM THE STATE RECOVERY COORDINATOR, GRAHAM SWIFT

February 1 was a day that changed the lives of many, forever.

Regardless of where community members find themselves on their recovery journey, the day marking a year since bushfire impacted Wooroloo and Gidgegannup would have been especially difficult.

The communities have tackled hardships that many people couldn't fathom. But over the past 12 months, community members have demonstrated incredible support for their neighbours and friends, showing extraordinary generosity, compassion, resilience and resolve.

From the outset, hundreds of people have put their hands up and knuckled down to contribute and work alongside one another. From individuals and charity groups volunteering their time and resources to input from all levels of government, the ongoing effort from all facets of

the Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery has aided these communities in getting on to the road to recovery and will continue to do so for some time yet.

Importantly, the events organised to acknowledge the communities' journey 12 months on from the bushfire were conceptualised and developed by community members and made possible with the support of the City of Swan*, the Shire of Mundaring*, local businesses and groups. These were very important and poignant and everyone involved should be incredibly proud of the result of their hard work.

It is important to continue to reach out to the many support services available, if needed. To find out how you can access these services, please visit the City of Swan or the Shire of Mundaring or call the Disaster Response Hotline on 1800 032 965.

Finally, my time as State Recovery Coordinator will conclude on 11 March 2022 and I would like to take this opportunity to express how privileged I feel to have shared part of this journey with everyone involved. I am in awe of the outstanding commitment to recovery shown to and by the affected communities and look forward to hearing stories of resilience and prosperity as you continue your recovery journey.

Melissa Pexton will take up the role of State Recovery Coordinator while retaining her current leadership role as State Recovery Controller for Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja. Melissa brings with her a wealth of emergency management, community engagement and recovery experience and knowledge to continue supporting a coordinated whole-of-government approach to the Wooroloo bushfire recovery.

*The Wooroloo Bushfire Community Recovery and Outreach Program is jointly funded through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

ABC OF REFLECTION

Local resident, Jan Pittman, shared a thoughtful "ABC" at the opening of the "12 Months On" exhibition to reflect upon the recovery journey thus far.

- A** Appreciation, Art & Assistance
- B** Bush Recovery & Botanists
- C** Community, Clean-up & C L A P!
- D** Determined & Donations
- E** Environmental, Education & Emergency Services
- F** Fireys, Fortitude, Friendship & Families
- G** Generosity, Goodwill & Grateful
- H** Help, Humour & Hampers
- I** Imagination & Indebted
- J** Juggling
- K** Kids & Kindness
- L** Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund
- M** Mosaics & Memories
- N** Neighbours & News
- O** Overseas News, Friends & Family
- P** Photos & Positive
- Q** Quiet & Quarantine
- R** Resilience & Rebuilding
- S** Strength, Safety & Sanctuary
- T** THANK YOU to all our support people
- U** Undefeated, Unafraid & US!!
- V** Values & Volunteers
- W** Welfare
- X** Xanthorrhoeas
- Y** Year On, You & YES!!
- Z** Zambias & Zealous



12 MONTHS ON...

In a show of resilience and optimism, members of the Wooroloo Bushfire impacted communities wanted the recognition of 12 months since the life-changing event to represent the strength of the community and to promote healing.

The Wooroloo Bushfire Community Led Art Project (CLAP)* was conceptualised by a couple of residents then supported by a group of 29 community members and the outcome was a thought-provoking exhibition appreciated by more than 300 visitors.

“12 Months On: An Exhibition of Community Images” showcased a collection of 52 photographs submitted depicting a captured

moment they connected strongly with in their experience before, during or after the fire. The images portrayed a spectrum of qualities which perfectly reflected the essence of the communities, strength, generosity, humour and optimism.

As community interest in the Project grew, the exhibition evolved to display various artistic contributions from budding local creatives, such as mosaic and watercolours. Symbolising the path of the fire, the exhibition opened in Wooroloo and moved to Gidgegannup, where it ended.

With great support from local governments, businesses** and Community Recovery Officers,

the exhibition and several other community-led events were held to acknowledge the tough journey many have experienced over the past year and to also provide support, care and a safe place for reflection.

*The project is part of the Wooroloo Bushfire Community Recovery and Outreach Program, funded through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (supporting City of Swan, Shire of Mundaring, Australian Red Cross and Department of Communities).

** The exhibition was also supported in various ways by local organisations including Bendigo Community Bank Mundaring, Parky Care, Mundaring Arts Centre, Midland Junction Arts Centre and Perth Hills Events.



Marri leaf (*Corymbia calophylla*) watercolours courtesy of Gidgegannup artist Jan Pittman, calophylla means “pretty leaf”

GEORGIA & IAN: CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The City of Swan recovery team members have been a familiar and steady presence for the past 12 months in supporting the rebuilding effort in communities affected by the Wooroloo bushfire.

Even before the fire, these dedicated recovery officers were a key part of the City's work in developing strong and resilient communities.

[For Ian Robinson and Georgia Marshall, the local recovery officer roles have been a natural extension of their work with the City – Ian in community safety, place management and community engagement and Georgia in leisure and recreation.](#)

Georgia has been in the position of business support officer for six months after several years in different roles at Swan Active Midland, including gym instructor, personal trainer and sport program supervisor.

"I have always loved any kind of work where I get to interact with people from all walks of life, and help them in any way possible," she said.

"In my six months working in the recovery space, I have learnt so much, not only from my colleagues, but from the amazing, resilient community members who get up and soldier on each morning."

"We are working with this community at such a vulnerable time and just the fact that they are letting us in, opening up and taking us along the recovery journey with them creates a connection. It's been great to get to know so many lovely, strong people."

Ian joined the recovery team early in the aftermath of the February 2021

fire on a two-year secondment funded through the joint Commonwealth and State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. As a nominated and trained local recovery officer with 25 years' experience working directly with communities at a grassroots level, he was happy to join the Wooroloo recovery effort.

He has no problem nominating the most rewarding part of his job.

"Easy, it's the people!" he said. "I consider it a privilege to be working with the affected community and all the wonderful volunteer organisations, who have lost and given so much."

"Giving 110 per cent to get things right for the people in our community can be mentally and physically draining, but there hasn't been a day in recovery where I haven't woken up refreshed and with a spring in my step knowing that the team and I will be making positive impacts on people's lives."

[Ian said it had been wonderful to see local people step up to volunteer for recovery committees and to run and support community events.](#)

"These community members have been so valuable in helping to guide the recovery, to act as community barometers and provide honest feedback, which is so important and greatly appreciated," he said.

Ian emphasises the value of teamwork, especially through the Joint Recovery Team, where the City of Swan has linked with the Shire of Mundaring, Department of Communities, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Red Cross to

drive the recovery effort.

Georgia had not previously worked directly with the Gidgegannup community but got to know some locals through her work at Swan Active and is pleased at how she has been able to quickly build connections since joining the recovery team.

With her background in the leisure sector, it is no surprise that away from work, Georgia enjoys reformer pilates, group fitness classes and spending time at the beach.

She is also a keen traveller.

"I can't wait to get back on a plane and head somewhere new!" she said.

With four sons aged six to 24, Ian finds his interests are broad to keep up with what they are all doing. But when he finds time for himself, he enjoys indulging in his creative hobby of building electric solid-body and cigar-box guitars.

"I find it really therapeutic and involves carpentry, electronics, spray painting and a degree of art and design," Ian said.

