

WOOROLOO BUSHFIRE RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

NOV 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE RECOVERY COORDINATOR, GRAHAM SWIFT



While the residential clean-up program has reached practical completion and Dr Ron Edwards has finished his term as State Recovery Controller, the recovery journey for many people impacted by the Wooroloo bushfire is still very much a work in progress.

With Christmas coming up and the threat of a new bushfire season looming, this may bring challenges for those of you in the community who have been affected. I hope that you are able to find some enjoyment in the festive season but I urge you to please make use of the assistance available to you if needed.

The City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring are doing a remarkable job supporting the community and the Department of Communities and Australian Red Cross are still readily available to provide help, as are a multitude of other community-based organisations.

The WA Government will continue to facilitate the State-led aspects of recovery and provide ongoing support to the local governments and the community for as long as it is needed.

>> To access support services, please visit the City of Swan or Shire of Mundaring Recovery Teams or call the Disaster Response Hotline on 1800 032 965.

COLLABORATION KEY IN HELPING PREPARE COMMUNITY

With bushfire season approaching, the Australian Red Cross, Wooroloo Volunteer Bushfire Brigade (BFB), Shire of Mundaring and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) recently collaborated on delivering a bushfire preparedness session specifically cognisant of community members who have experienced the trauma of bushfire.

Presented by Wooroloo BFB Captain and Bushfire Ready facilitator Lesley Lynam, the session was held on Tuesday 23 November at the Wooroloo BFB Station and was open to members of the local community from the Shire of Mundaring and City of Swan. It provided an opportunity to chat about topics such as putting together a bushfire plan, preparing your property, packing an emergency kit, and understanding the Bushfire Warnings System and where to find reliable emergency information.

Lesley said that preparation is on everyone's mind but we are conscious that talking about it or looking at preparedness related content could be triggering for people who have experienced a traumatic bushfire event.

"We run community sessions ahead of the season to help people get prepared and it is great to have some assistance with modifying the content for those impacted by the Wooroloo bushfire," she said.

Members of the Red Cross recovery team and DFES Community Preparedness helped to review the Bushfire Ready presentation from a recovery perspective ahead of the community session. Representative from the Red Cross, Department of Communities and Shire of Mundaring were also present on the night to provide support to community members if required.

Deputy State Recovery Coordinator Suellen Flint said it might not seem like a big thing but to someone who has experienced it, small changes and having some sensitivity to people's past experience can make a big difference. "The first season after a traumatic event can be very tough," Suellen said.

"The local brigades do a wonderful job and we hope to continue supporting them so they can better understand how to engage with impacted residents and the community."

The Wooroloo BFB is also encouraging community members to come along to the station between 9am – 11am every Saturday if they need assistance with putting together their bushfire plan. For more information, please contact woorolooBFB@gmail.com or follow the [Wooroloo Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade](#) on Facebook.

RECOVERY A REWARDING ROLE FOR JO

For Jo Reimers, the role of Wooroloo Bushfire Recovery Coordinator for the Department of Communities (Communities) has been the ideal opportunity to bring together her extensive skills and experience from a career in human services and emergency response.

Jo has been a familiar and welcoming presence in the Bushfire Recovery Centre in Gidgegannup as part of Communities' Emergency Response Team. Taking up the opportunity to work in the evacuation centres in the immediate aftermath of the bushfire, the deployment has since become longer term and Jo has taken on the role of Recovery Coordinator.

"I've loved the opportunity to come back into a recovery role," Jo said. "It's very rewarding to be in a position to help people when they really need it."

She said one of the great things about the job was that there was no such thing as a typical day.

"It changes every day. It's a rollercoaster ride and there is always something different to respond to as we support people in their recovery," Jo said.



"It's been wonderful to build rapport and trust with people affected by the fire, and build professional rewarding relationships.

"It's rewarding to see the positive results and see how far people have come."

Previously working for the Federal Department of Human Services (Centrelink) Emergency Response Team, Jo played a key role in supporting people affected by disasters. Her work involved deployments to disaster areas to offer support in connecting people with services and crisis funding, as well as a broader role of community engagement in vulnerable communities - experience she's been able to put to good use during the Wooroloo bushfire recovery.

In May 2013, Jo moved to a Perth-based role with the WA Department of Housing, where she worked as a

Senior Case Manager (Team Leader) for the newly developed Disruptive Behaviour Management Unit. When Housing merged into Communities four years ago, she was able to return to an emergency response role, responding to emergencies of all kinds including natural disasters and initially the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jo is working to expand and formalise her skill set as she nears completion of a Diploma in Community Services and looks to take on further studies.

"For me, it is all about building relationships with people and advocating for them," she said. "It's great that people are really thankful for what we are able to do."

Jo and the rest of the team can be contacted at the Bushfire Recovery Centre or at regular local events such as the community morning tea held at 10am each Friday in the Agricultural Hall at the Gidgegannup showgrounds.

LESSONS TO GUIDE FUTURE RECOVERY

Monitoring and evaluation are an important part of the State Government's involvement in the recovery efforts for the Wooroloo bushfire and are essential in ensuring programs and initiatives are effective and able to meet current and emerging needs.

While the State Recovery Plan guides the State's efforts and a Community Recovery Fund* worth \$18.1 million has provided much needed funding for recovery programs, these are also supported by a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

State Recovery Coordinator Graham Swift said the aim of all recovery programs should be to build upon learnings from previous events and strive for improvement.

"With this in mind, processes have been put in place to capture the

lessons identified during the Wooroloo bushfire recovery so that we can develop recommendations for the future," he said.

"The intent is to streamline and improve current policies and procedures in the event of future disasters."

DFES Manager Recovery Operations Sam Stokes said there had been a range of activities already undertaken and many were ongoing.

"These include regular updates provided by different agencies through the State Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG), as well as the development of a dashboard reporting system to capture progress in key areas such as the clean-up program and financial payments," Sam said.

Other monitoring and evaluation activities include:

- an online perceptions survey for SRCG members and a debrief

session to explore the key themes that arose

- a community needs analysis workshop with key recovery stakeholders
- a debrief workshop with clean-up program contractors to gain observations from an operational perspective
- an ongoing lessons register maintained by DFES to capture observations as they arise.

For more information on any State recovery monitoring and evaluation activities, please contact Sam Stokes by emailing wooroloo@dfes.wa.gov.au.

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