

WOOROLOO BUSHFIRE RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

OCT 2021

RESTORATION OF CITY ASSETS

The City of Swan is making progress in the restoration of community assets destroyed or damaged in the Wooroloo bushfire.

In addition to the significant impacts on roads and essential public infrastructure, the fire also caused considerable damage to public recreational facilities and infrastructure such as walking trails, picnic furniture, bridle trails, footpaths, ablution blocks and septic systems. Reserves and other City properties over a big area from Noble Falls in the east to Bells Rapids in the west were affected. There was also widespread damage to the natural environment, including the loss of many mature trees.

In a joint initiative with the State Government, the City established a Community and Recreational Assets Restoration Program.

The first priority for the City has been the removal of all fallen trees covering paths and the reinstatement of walking trails in the bush reserves affected by the fire. This has enabled popular destinations such as F R Berry Reserve, Noble Falls Picnic Area and Bells Rapids to re-open to the public, however visitors are encouraged to take care as the natural environment continues to regenerate.

The focus of the program is now shifting towards the repair of larger built assets like bridges and bridle trail fences.

City of Swan Mayor David Lucas said the Wooroloo bushfire was the most significant natural disaster in the City of Swan in at least the last 20 years, and many families and local businesses have been deeply impacted.

"This year, the City of Swan is focused on re-unifying and strengthening our community as we recover from the impact of the fire. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the Commonwealth and State Governments in supporting the rebuilding and recovery of our community," Mayor David Lucas said.

The Community and Recreational Asset Restoration Program is jointly funded through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.



A crew mulching fallen trees as part of the restoration program

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





MESSAGE FROM THE STATE RECOVERY CONTROLLER, DR RON EDWARDS

It has been my privilege to serve as the State Recovery Controller – Wooroloo Bushfire for these last eight months. To witness the inner strength and resilience of affected community members and the compassion and care shown by those who have put up their hands to help, has truly been moving.

From the first day of my appointment to the role on 5 February, it was made very clear to me by the Premier that this bushfire emergency was considered very serious and that the recovery effort would be a great priority for the State from the top down. In this regard I was fortunate to also have the full support of then Minister Fran Logan and the new Minister for Emergency Services Hon Reece Whitby MLA, as well as Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm AFSM.

One thing that struck me from the outset was that there were so many organisations and individuals who wanted to help and these people needed to be given the opportunity to do so. By initiating the State Recovery Coordination Group Partnership Forum, it was my intention to set out the architecture for the recovery so that all parties involved could work out where they could best fit in and contribute, working alongside each other.

This meant that aside from Commonwealth, State and Local Government, there were also

representatives in the room from groups such as the Red Cross, Minderoo Foundation, Coates Hire, BlazeAid, Disaster Relief Australia, the Lord Mayors Distress Relief Fund, and WA Wildlife to name but a few. It has been an honour to work with so many good people who are so enthusiastic about helping, whether it is lending a friendly ear to someone doing it tough, providing much-needed temporary accommodation, or installing new fencing.

I like to think that every disaster brings with it an opportunity to improve the way that we do things. With the Wooroloo bushfire, it was the first time that the Animal Welfare in Emergencies Plan was activated by the State Government. With up to 40 veterinary professionals involved each day and more than 750 animals assessed, the activation had some wonderful outcomes as well as lessons identified which can be built into the way we respond to future emergencies.

We also had the Bushfire Prone Landscaping and Environmental Planning Forum held in July, which provided a raft of information about topics such as bushfire property standards, fire ecology and protection, sustainability, landscaping and Aboriginal heritage. I hope that this community event has been useful for residents in forming a vision of the environment you want for the future, as you begin to think about rebuilding.

With Christmas and the return of the high threat bushfire period on the horizon, as well as the 12 month mark approaching, there may be some tough times still to come. If you have any thoughts on appropriate ways to acknowledge these events, please share them with your local recovery officers. More importantly, if you find that you need some support as these dates draw closer, please do not hesitate to reach out and make use of the support services available.

My role has now come to an end and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' State Recovery Coordinator Graham Swift will be assuming State responsibility for the ongoing recovery effort and providing support for City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring. I have done my best to advance the recovery efforts and I trust that my contribution made a difference. The two local governments are doing an outstanding job of representing and supporting the community, and there are still so many organisations and individuals willing and available to provide assistance.

There is a long road ahead but you should be proud of the wonderful resilience of your community. While this terrible bushfire is the kind of disaster that no one wants, it has brought the community closer together in some ways and I hope that these links continue. Whether it is meeting up through community gatherings and events, or simply enjoying a cuppa with your neighbour, connecting with each other and looking out for one another will help to see you through. I sincerely look forward to visiting your wonderful community in the future to see how things are coming along.



TEMPORARY HOUSING A BOOST FOR BUSHFIRE SURVIVORS

Temporary housing pods provided by the Minderoo Foundation have given a welcome boost to more than 40 residents who lost their homes in the Wooroloo bushfire. The 7.2 metre converted sea container units have enabled some residents to stay on their properties while they make plans for the future.

Minderoo first installed the housing pods in areas hit by the Black Summer bushfires on the east coast and Kangaroo Island in 2019-20, and Wooroloo was the first time they were used in Western Australia.



Minderoo Foundation Fire and Flood Resilience spokesperson Mark Tazewell said the group swung into action quickly when the scale of the Wooroloo fire became apparent and they connected with support agencies and affected people through the recovery centre in Gidgegannup.

“We initially built 30 pods and demand grew to 44, however circumstances for people change and we need to be flexible. We ended up installing 42 pods on properties in Gidgegannup and Wooroloo,” Mark said.

The pods have four bunk beds, a kitchen, toilet, shower and washing machine and come ready to connect to power and water.

“It is not meant to replicate a house. The pod is a basic amenity that gets people back on their land,” he said.

“Residents have combined a pod with other facilities such as a caravan or a shed to give them more room to move.

“It’s a really important step for people

to be able to be home and start the recovery process.”

Minderoo teamed up with the Salvation Army and its partners to fund the pods which cost \$30,000 per unit to manufacture, install and maintain.

Tilden Park residents Clint Maher and Tamara Blake have been using a Minderoo housing pod since July, having a bigger one made specially to accommodate their family of three children. They are using the pod for sleeping and showers and have a donga for their main living space.

Clint said the experience had been problem-free and made a big difference for them. “We wouldn’t be living back here without it, so it has been fantastic,” he said.

The couple, who had only been at Tilden Park for two years before the fire, have signed a contract with a builder and are hoping to move into a new house on the property in 18 months’ time.

SHORT STAY GETAWAYS

Changing our environments through tiring times can improve perspective. When Parkerville Community Care Founder Bruce Watkins learned that Wooroloo Bushfire affected residents were living in temporary accommodation through a harsh winter, he was motivated to create an easy way for people to take a break.

“We tap into our resources and community connections to provide opportunities for people who need it the most,” said Bruce, who experienced the Parkerville Fire in 2014. “I called my friend who rents holiday homes in Preston Beach and said, ‘Can you help?’ Having been on the backdoor of the Yarloop Fires, she could empathise and we got to work.”

Working alongside the Department of Communities (DoC) Bruce started mobilising support. Through donations of Parkerville Community Care’s Bushfire Relief Fund, five families have now been able to take up a weekend holiday stay in Preston Beach.

“Trauma doesn’t define us, but it does bring us together and builds bonds,” Bruce said.

“I’m happy these families could go away and regenerate by spending time together. One family member told me how refreshing it was to get away from all of the jobs.”

Bruce hopes that by removing the barriers of taking a break, this initiative can create a change of perspective in recovery, even if for a moment. Two more families will be staying in Preston Beach in mid and late November.

Everyone can benefit from a break. Remember the Red Cross and Department of Communities are available to support you. If you would like to submit your interest for a stay, please get in touch via email to recovery@communities.wa.gov.au

ParkyCare volunteers have also been assisting residents by providing some basic gardening and tidying-up help around their properties, with residents being very appreciative of the support.



DoC Bushfire Recovery Coordinator Stephanie Williams, ParkyCare Community Liaison Officer Rowan du Boulay, ParkyCare Operations Director Bruce Watkins, DoC Community Resilience Liaison Officers Ioannis Dimopoulos and Jo Reimers

COMMUNITY RECOVERY SNAPSHOT

Social Connection



2 rounds of Red Cross Community Outreach completed, with **2744** properties visited



150+ Community events*

Environmental Care



2700+ plants donated



8,891 cubic metres of rubble and **108** tonnes of metal recycled as part of the Clean-up Program*



All impacted public reserves reopened

Rebuilding



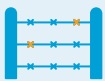
84% of completion certificates issued for **135** properties cleared *



43 sea containers donated for storage



2 community tool libraries operating



Approx. **\$130,000** of fencing donated

Economic Relief



\$16.7M donated to the Lord Mayors Distress Relief Fund, distributed to **277** recipients



\$560,000 in State Government Bushfire Relief Grants distributed



17 businesses supported by BizRebuild

*Jointly funded through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

Based on figures for February through to October 2021

