

MADRA News



MADRA meetings recommenced again in February as we caught up with some of the projects that had continued through the summer break and discussed priorities for the year to come. The main concerns remain the same: tackling the housing issues that are so crucial to the district's recovery and resilience; following up on the valuable projects that are underway and in planning; maintaining connections and seeking support from the relevant agencies and levels of government; and – probably most importantly – seeking ways to bring the community together so MADRA can best represent and advocate for Mallee and District. We want – and need your feedback!

Housing

MADRA is continuing to pursue social housing options – it is a long road! Homes Victoria says it is “currently working through different housing and funding options” and has promised details to be provided in the near future. MADRA has requested that Homes Victoria (part of DFFH) build enough housing to meet the needs of the district into the longer term. An immediate build of five houses and five townhouses has been requested. It is based on the loss of houses due to the fires – to ensure that our local needs are distinguished from the general lack of social housing across Victoria.

A key factor is to ensure that anyone who is renting and might qualify for social housing puts their name on the social housing register – Lea Davis at MDHSS will help people to do so.

In the meantime, MADRA is continuing to work with BRV and EGSC to hopefully increase the number of small modular homes that can be used for periods up to five years. In the next two months, MADRA expects to be able to make announcements about the provision of these short-term options.

There have also been local community members who have offered land for short-term or long-term housing – and MADRA is trying to work these offers into any schemes we can.

Grants news

Congratulations to the Mallee community organisations that were awarded inaugural grants from the East Gippsland Community Foundation (EGCF). EGCF is a philanthropic community foundation formed in April 2021 with the purpose of providing funding to support the East Gippsland communities in their long-term recovery from the 2019-2020 Victorian bushfires. MADRA was glad to lend its support to the grant applications for these successful recipients:

- Wilderness Workspace Mallee and project partner Australian Centre for Regional Entrepreneurship.
- Mallee & District Historical Society Inc (Mallee WWII Bunker Museum power supply project)
- Mallee Halls and Recreation Reserve Grounds Committee of Management Inc. (Emergency Power Generation)
- Mallee Community Health Infrastructure and Resilience Fund Inc (Ashes to Music, Mallee Creative Recovery 2022).

The Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants were also announced last week. Several Mallee organisations were successful in receiving funding:

- Mallee Emergency Services Facility East Gippsland VIC
- Mallee Bowling Club Community Hub
- Mallee Mudbrick Pavilion Upgrade
- Mallee & District Tool Library Project.

MADRA would like to congratulate the many organisations that have worked hard to envisage and plan projects for the recovery and resilience of our community and environment.

We also recognise that applying for grants can be an onerous and time-consuming process. MADRA is looking at ways to support those groups who missed out on these grants in making applications for upcoming grant rounds.

Information about grant opportunities can be found regularly on the MADRA Facebook page.

Parks, Buildings, Lakes and Infrastructure update

The MADRA PBLI team and Parks Victoria have been working hard behind the scenes with the replacement of the jetties and other assets and ideas for the lakes. Floating pontoon jetties are nearing completion at the Genoa River and Gravelly Point day visitor areas.

- These projects are a fantastic example of ‘building back better’ in fire recovery. They are co-funded by fire recovery funding provided by the State Government and Parks Victoria’s insurance.
- Parks Victoria’s recovery and capital projects teams have worked closely with MADRA to plan and deliver a significantly improved result above and beyond ‘like-for-like’ replacement.
- This is a great outcome for visitors and provides a positive legacy from the program.
- Work has been undertaken at Genoa Falls and Genoa Peak, with more work being planned.
- Signage is being replaced.

What’s next?

- Designs are being currently worked on for several other jetties including the reinstatement of the King Fisher Pt (King Fish Pt) jetty.
- Detailed planning and assessments are being carried out for the old township site and



Sou-West Arm jetty.

Photo: Parks Victoria

making this a wonderful experience when visiting with interpretive signage, boardwalks, paths and a loop walk.

- We are working through the idea of a couple of swing moorings within the lake system for vessels to park up and take some parking pressure off the jetties.
- Design work is progressing on making Genoa River Fire Trail and Gravelly Point more ‘all abilities friendly’ and to provide better use of these wonderful day visitor locations. Parks Vic has designed the floating jetties with a hoist reciprocal, so we are exploring the idea of having hoists available for people to use.
- The possible addition of fishing platforms around the lake.



Floating pontoon jetty at Genoa River.

Photo: Parks Victoria

Parks Vic has indicated that in April they will have designs ready for community consultation – stay tuned for more information about this.

Recovery Plan update

Work is continuing on an update of the Recovery Plan that will include the progress of various projects under the pillars of the plan. This will be useful for both the MADRA committee and the wider community to review the projects that featured on the voting report and to think about the priorities for the coming year.

As the latest Census data becomes available this will be incorporated into the plan and will give us very detailed information about changes in our population since the bushfires.

A current Recovery Plan will also assist community organisations in taking advantage of any further grant opportunities. Many thanks to Jenny Lloyd for her ongoing work on this.

Regional connectivity

The importance of reliable communication systems in remote communities became even more urgent during the 2019-20 bushfires. Last June, Gipsy Point was awarded a mobile base station under the Federal Government's Regional Connectivity Project.

MADRA wrote to Darren Chester in November with concerns about delays to the rollout of the program and the installation of the Gipsy Point mobile tower, stressing the importance of the tower to the local community.

It appears that delays in station deployment are due to the complexities of the project and the finalisation of funding agreements. Darren Chester has promised to raise our concerns regarding delays to the project with the responsible department.

MADRA will be following up on this issue in the coming months.

Other news

The Fuel Management Group met again on 16 February to continue discussions and plans for Fuel Management in 2022. Work on the Western Front is due to commence in the near future with other areas on the Joint Fuel Management

Program to be undertaken as planned. A more detailed update from the Fuel Management Group will follow shortly.

Renegade Films are planning to screen the documentary they have been making about the 2019-20 fires and Mallacoota's experience of bushfire recovery in March. MADRA is conscious that viewing the film may cause distress to some of the community and will be providing a survey to ask whether/how people would first like to see the film. At this stage, a community-only viewing is proposed for Sunday 20 March.

Committee members met with Matt Russell, the BRV Aboriginal Culture and Healing Recovery Coordinator for Gippsland. We were really excited to re-establish the connection with Matt and look forward to further discussions in the coming months.

We welcomed Les Carson from our local CFA to a MADRA to last week's meeting and will appreciate his ongoing contributions to discussions of fire safety around the town.

Thanks,

MADRA



Genoa Falls signage and rock bollards. Photo: Parks Victoria