



COMMUNITY-LED RECOVERY PLAN V2

Ongoing Recovery, Future Resilience



Mosses Growing in a Crevice (Photo: Phillipa Hamilton)

MADRA acknowledges All Traditional Custodians of this Land on which we live and recognises their continuing connection to Land, Waters, and Culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Thank You

To the many local volunteer organisations who are working hard on our recovery including charities, interest groups, incorporated associations, and sports clubs.

To the many members of our community who put up ideas for our recovery and to those who voted on those ideas.

To our public and private sector funding and delivery partners who are working diligently to progress our recovery.

To our politicians who are lobbying on behalf of our community and checking in on our wellbeing.

For editorial suggestions and advice:

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Bryce Watts-Parker

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Foreword

Nearly two and a half years since the bushfires (followed by flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic) and there has been significant progress towards our Vision of an inclusive, vibrant, strong, and safe community.

So many people are working hard on our recovery – local volunteer organisations, clubs, and charities as well as our politicians, government, and non-government agencies. The efforts of these groups, combined with MADRA's community consultation, advocacy, and support, have seen well over \$50m committed for recovery projects in our district. Our voice is being heard. Together, we have been able to influence our recovery in line with our priorities, preferences, local knowledge and – most importantly – our values. As a community, we can be proud.

We also acknowledge the hard work of the many volunteers who wrote grant applications that were not successful. Grant funding is still available, and we continue working with agencies and community groups to get the best possible results for our community.

Of course, putting a dollar figure against recovery projects does not tell the whole story. The flow-on effects of investment and community advocacy are evident. Opportunities to reconnect through social events, ongoing mental health and other supports, environmental restoration activities, the social and economic benefits of rebuilt and enhanced infrastructure – these are essential elements of recovery that are difficult to quantify.

While much has been achieved, there is still much to do. Work continues in the areas of fuel management, energy resilience and finding ways to broaden and diversify our economy and create employment.

Replacing lost housing stocks remains a critical recovery priority. The lack of affordable rental and social housing adversely impacts our social, health and economic viability on many levels. In April the Minister for Housing committed to building ten homes for social and affordable housing. In addition to the Black Summer grant funding received by MDHSS for additional MIVA cottages, this is a great start.

Some of the projects in the Recovery Plan have not yet commenced as not having project owners. We are seeking volunteers to take on these projects but recognise there are limits to volunteering capacity. We already punch above our volunteer weight as it is!¹

Next Update

This version of the MADRA Recovery Plan updates recovery priorities and projects and incorporates the 'lessons learned' from two years of community-led recovery.

The next update of the Recovery Plan will take place after the results of the 2021 Census have been published in mid-2022. For the first time, we will have a pre-bushfires baseline and post-bushfires demographic and other statistical information. At this time, we will also update our PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis to incorporate Federal and State budgets, Federal election commitments and economic outlooks. This will further guide our recovery strategies.

¹ 39.9% of our population is involved in volunteer work compared with 19% of Australians. (ABS)

Chapter One – Introduction

Document Purpose

Our community encompasses the localities of Mallacoota, Genoa, Gipsy Point, Wangarabell, Weeragua, Maramingo Creek, Wallagaraugh, Gipsy Point and Wroxham, collectively known as Mallacoota and District.

This Recovery Plan is a dynamic document that reflects our community's priorities as we recover from the devastating bushfires of 2019-20.

The Plan has several uses:

- To guide the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc (MADRA) in its community-led recovery and advocacy roles.
- As a resource for community organisations seeking information to support repair and renewal activities and funding applications.
- To enable our external funding and service delivery partners - government and philanthropic organisations - to understand how to best meet our recovery needs.
- To capture the history of our recovery and to inform future disasters.

This Plan is not the product of one author or committee. Instead, it captures and synthesises the thoughts and efforts of many individuals and organisations. In so doing, we lay the foundations for community-led recovery. This is OUR recovery story.

In addition to our community, the Plan has been written with several audiences in mind. This includes our elected political representatives, government agencies and philanthropic organisations. In other words, those entities which have a major role in funding and helping deliver our recovery priorities. The Plan, therefore, contains a LOT of detail, so these groups fully understand our circumstances.

The Plan is structured as follows:

- [Chapter One](#) provides background information and scope.
- [Chapter Two](#) contains information about Mallacoota and District including history, geography, demography, values, and critical infrastructure.
- [Chapter Three](#) outlines our bushfire recovery framework.
- [Chapter Four](#) contains analysis and strategies for assessing our needs.
- [Chapter Five](#) outlines projects pertaining to aboriginal healing and culture.
- [Chapter Six](#) looks at our priorities for our people and wellbeing.
- [Chapter Seven](#) looks at initiatives for replacing and renewing our buildings and infrastructure.
- [Chapter Eight](#) outlines ways of restoring and reinvigorating our economy including business initiatives.
- [Chapter Nine](#) details initiatives for restoring, protecting and valuing our environment and biodiversity.
- [Chapter Ten](#) looks at budget and finance issues including grants and donations.

The Appendixes contain elucidatory information:

- A list of acronyms and abbreviations is provided in [Appendix A](#).
- [Appendix B](#) is a detailed stakeholder analysis.
- [Appendix C](#) provides amplifying statistical and about Mallacoota and District.
- [Appendix D](#) is the Snapshot Survey conducted by the Thinking Group in April 2020.
- [Appendix E](#) contains the priorities voted by community for recovery suggestions submitted by community as part of community consultation.
- [Appendix F](#) contains analysis of the external political, economic, social, and environmental factors that will impact and inform our recovery.
- [Appendix G](#) is a dynamic progress report.

A companion document to this Recovery Plan summarises recovery initiatives and actions.

Background

Like so many others in Australia in 2019-20, our district was ravaged by fire. A significant amount of tinder-dry bush, unseasonal hot weather and below-average rainfall combined to create perfect fire conditions.

The fires reached us on 31st December 2019. The fire was so intense, it created its own weather system and momentum. In scenes relayed around the world, thousands of people sought shelter on our foreshores as the fires approached. They were advised if the Country Fire Authority (CFA) sirens sounded, they might have to enter the water to escape the radiant heat.

Fred Becker, a much-loved timber mill owner, sadly succumbed to a medical condition while defending the family home just outside Genoa.

A total of 123 homes were destroyed and 83% of land area burned. Many more properties suffered damage including losses of outbuildings, water tanks, fences, pasture, and income-producing assets.²

There was significant loss of wildlife and many birds and animals suffered horrific injuries. The historic Genoa bridge burned as did much of our wilderness coast infrastructure including boardwalks, lookouts and access steps and ramps.

In our district's living memory, there is no comparable event.³

The damage might have been more widespread but for Country Fire Authority (CFA) strike forces in the vicinity. At least two strike teams were working around the Victorian Snowy fires and were deployed to Mallacoota as part of a managed CFA response. Other teams were in transit after assisting the Rural Fire Service (RFS) during the NSW South Coast fires.

Early assistance arrived in the form of the Far Saracen, a Norwegian-flagged supply vessel that services gas and oil platforms. The vessel had been redirected from the Esso gas fields at Golden Beach and arrived on New Year's Eve bringing pallets of food and water and diesel

² 207 properties required subsequent removal of burned debris and clean by Grocon. n

³ In 1983, fires approached from the Narrows and the West. Fearing the worst, people gathered on the foreshore. A wind shift saw the fire turn back on itself. At that time, 75% of the National Park burned but our townships did not.

for generators and CFA tankers. The Far Saracen became a temporary home for vulnerable people. The crew also conducted maintenance works on police boats.⁴

Many residents had evacuated before the fire or were evacuated shortly thereafter; they were unable to return home for many weeks. Families were separated. Some of our elderly residents who evacuated went into temporary aged care, away from their local support systems.

At the same time as locals were evacuating, tourists were arriving in town and became stranded. People (both locals and visitors) and their pets were eventually evacuated by sea in HMAS CHOULES⁵ and MV Sycamore. Those too frail or young to undertake a sea voyage were evacuated by air. Vehicles and other possessions had to be left behind pending later recovery.



Figure 1: HMAS CHOULES Visit March 2021

Shortly after the fires, the Mallacoota Main Hall was established as an assembly point and informal relief centre. This was an organic process as there is no formal plan in place for such a contingency. The relief effort at the Main Hall was managed by our East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC) Place Manager Eva Grunden and community volunteers, in particular Don Ashby.

The Main Hall also became the headquarters for the Red Cross relief and registration teams. As the emergency phase unfolded, daily briefings by emergency agencies were conducted for residents and visitors at the Main Hall.

Our local community radio station 3MGB undertook its emergency broadcaster role, providing information and emergency warnings. The station relied on generator power during this period. Following the daily Incident Management Team meetings, the local SES

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-07/they-fed-us-they-gave-us-beds-unexpected-hero-brings-supplies-t/11849772>

⁵ One of the ways towns have historically formed and maintained enduring bonds with our Navy is by adopting a ship. The relationship formed with HMAS CHOULES and our community during the post bushfire evacuation has resulted in Mallacoota 'adopting' HMAS CHOULES. The township of Mallacoota will now have a permanent connection with all in the Navy who serve in the CHOULES.

Controller Leo Op den Brouw provided an on-air brief which was made available as a podcast for those outside Mallacoota or who were unable to attend briefings.

Residents of Genoa and the outlying districts were cut off from Mallacoota. Without power and with roads closed for a prolonged time, residents had to be self-sufficient, surviving on non-perishable foods and with limited access to amenities such as hot water⁶. The Genoa Hall was restricted in its capacity to support the needs of community and the Genoa Pub became a community hub. There was no CFA presence at Genoa.

Our two doctors had evacuated prior to the bushfire and returned as soon as possible. A locum doctor was in place and other medical professionals were flown in as opportunity allowed.

The Mallacoota-Genoa Road – the only sealed road out of Mallacoota – closed on the 30th of December 2019 and did not re-open until the 6th of February 2020, a total of 39 days. During the road closures, only escorted convoys could leave to/from NSW due to the dangers posed by fallen and unsafe trees.⁷ Travel west of Genoa was restricted to emergency organisations responsible for the massive task of clearing the Princes Highway of debris and unsafe trees. The Princes Highway east of Bairnsdale to Genoa closed on the 30th of December 2019 and was closed for 37 days, reopening on the 4th of February 2020. The Princes Highway from Genoa to the NSW border closed on the 31st of December 2019 and reopened on the 4th of February 2020.⁸ However, escorted convoys could NSW prior to the official reopening.

Instead of seasonal tourists, Mallacoota became a temporary home for emergency personnel from many organisations including, but not limited to, the Australian Defence Force (ADF), Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria (AV), CFA, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), State Emergency Service (SES), Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) and the East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC).

The power was out for an extended period. Luckily, an AusNet emergency diesel generator was in place and, when commissioned, provided an interim power source as mains power was progressively restored over several weeks.

The internet was a communications lifeline. Our internet service is patchy at the best of times and came under considerable strain. The newly installed above-ground cabling for the NBN burned and NBN installation was put back until February 2021 pending replacement cabling, which will now be underground. Those with mobile phone coverage were generally able to access the internet successfully.

Essential items were delivered by sea or air. Unleaded petrol was rationed, eventually down to a \$10 per day limit for generators only. Diesel was reserved for emergency vehicles only.

The rubbish trucks were unable to get through as the highway was closed. Our Lions Club took on the enormous task of collecting rubbish from homes and taking it to the tip.

⁶ Letter from Genoa Town Hall committee dated 16 August 2020

⁷ This enabled some residents to return earlier than the official road openings and also enable residents to travel north for medical and other needs.

⁸ East Gippsland Bushfires 2019-20 Asset Impact Snapshot.

Local businesses suffered the loss of cash flow at peak tourist time and faced having to close and/or lay off staff. There have been adverse flow-on effects to other businesses.

Physical health and well-being suffered in the aftermath of the fires. Many people were traumatised from being directly impacted or from volunteer exhaustion. Dense smoke for weeks after meant masks were necessary to avoid smoke inhalation. Asthma sufferers had to stay inside. The only facilities in town with air filtration are the Medical Centre and the Mallacoota and District Health and Support Service (MDHSS). For a short time, bottled water was distributed through the Main Hall relief centre and supermarkets following advice not to drink mains water.

Mental health problems surfaced as people relived bushfire trauma and were trying to cope with loss and damage.

In late February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. The impacts are ongoing and placing further strain on community resilience. Other ongoing stresses include housing and accommodation pressures, rebuilding, and loss of income.

[A potted history of the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc \(MADRA\)⁹](#)

In early 2020, Mallacoota and District locals Lyn Harwood, Leo Op den Brouw, Leonie Daws, Gail Sands, Marie Connellan and Don Ashby, together with Steve Pascoe (a Disaster Recovery Mentor) and Eva Grunden (EGSC), began meeting to start the process of a community-led recovery program for Mallacoota and District. This group became known as the Mallacoota Recovery Thinking Group (the Thinking Group).

On 15th January 2020, a large group of community representatives was invited to attend a meeting to discuss a way forward. This broader group comprised the President (or another elected representative) of every organisation known in Mallacoota and District. The purpose of the meeting was to gauge if there was merit in taking the community-led recovery program concept further. The meeting was held in the school library and attended by about 60 people.

A proposed model for co-ordinating community recovery was tested with the community representatives. The model was based on best practice community-led recovery and required the establishment of an incorporated body or association. The proposal was endorsed by community representatives and the Thinking Group was invited to flesh out a process for establishing a recovery association.

Over the following three weeks the core Thinking Group, together with other interested locals, worked on a draft constitution and a vision and purposes statement. Work also commenced with EGSC to initiate an election process adhering to Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) guidelines. On 2nd February 2020, this work was presented to a larger representative group at the Mudbrick Pavilion. On 4th February 2020, the proposal was put to all interested locals at the Golf Club at which an estimated 500 plus people attended.

⁹ Mallacoota Disaster Recovery Group, 2020, *A Potted History of the Mallacoota Recovery Association*, Mallacoota Mouth

The proposal was overwhelmingly endorsed, and the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association (MADRA) was formed. As of April 2021, MADRA has over 782 members comprising residents and property owners.

Over the following months, the Thinking Group continued working to ensure the vision of community-led recovery was realised. This included ongoing work with the VEC, Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) and EGSC and a Snapshot survey to Association members, with the aim of articulating their values and commenting on the effects the bushfire had on them.

The VEC managed the election process for the MADRA Committee, the first of its kind in Victoria. Nominations for MADRA committee members were sought by the 16th of April 2020. A total of 44 local candidates stood for election. Voting by postal vote closed at 5 pm on the 20th of May 2020. The results of the election were announced on 21st May 2020. A high voting response rate of 88 per cent was recorded. On the 9th of June 2020, the newly formed MADRA committee elected its office bearers.

We thank the Thinking Group for their vision, courage, and hard work.

Our Committee

Initial MADRA Committee members and office bearers were Dr David Appleton (Chair), Jenny Lloyd (Deputy Chair), Trindi Suratman (Secretary), Graham Dempster (Treasurer), Peter Hancock (Communications), Bryce Watts-Parker (Media Liaison), Jude Benton, Tanya de Geus, Brodie Gaudion, Paul Preston, Mark Tregellas, Kerri Warren.

Our first Annual General Meeting was held on the 17th of August 2021. The current committee comprises Paul Preston (Chair). Peter Hancock (Deputy Chair), Carol Hopkins (Secretary), Graham Dempster (Treasurer), Bryce Watts-Parker, Kate Cowden, Rosie Morton, Jeanette Obri, Phil Piper and Reiner Hurst. Gary Proctor was also a member of the committee.

Administrative Support: Amy Preston until end December 2020
 Maggie Langdon/Sabine Amos

Our Mission

‘MADRA was established to ensure the needs, wants and aspirations of our community are considered as part of the recovery process following the 2019-20 bushfires. We are a voice for our community.’

We will play an active role in community-led recovery by:

- Encouraging community involvement in the recovery and rebuilding process and related activities.
- Identifying and prioritising the needs of Mallacoota and District and assisting in the recovery and rebuilding process.
- Influencing government bodies to work to meet identified community needs and priorities.
- Facilitating communication of information between community, government, and agencies.
- Advocating for individuals, families, and community groups.
- Attracting charitable funds and identifying projects/needs requiring funding.
- Providing a focus for communication and co-ordination between community groups.
- Channelling funding and other opportunities to appropriate groups and individuals
- Working with our funding and delivery partners to ensure optimal disaster recovery outcomes for Mallacoota and District.
- Working with other Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) to share lessons learned and offer support.

What we will not do....

We are a diverse community that does not always agree. There will be situations where the community is split, and decisions cannot be reached.

In such cases, we will not take sides or mediate disputes. Nor will we intervene in the decision-making processes of other organisations or duplicate their roles.

If the matter is being driven by government (local, state, and federal), and there is a failure to adequately consult our community, we cannot take on that role. Rather, we will ‘push back’ to government seeking better information to inform decision making and for more fulsome community consultation (perhaps with an independent facilitator if the issue is divisive). Usually, this will be on issues requiring specialist knowledge and/or policy matters.

We looked to how other communities deal with divergent viewpoints. Key is not rushing decision making (where possible) and encouraging ongoing discussion and respectful debate until all parties reach a position they can live with. If agreement cannot be reached, MADRA’s default position is ‘we will do no harm’. Our focus will be progressing those community-driven initiatives that have community backing.

Our Vision

We will be an inclusive, vibrant, strong, and safe community.

Our vision will be achieved when:

- Everyone in our community who needs bushfire assistance has received it, no one will have slipped between the cracks or left behind.
- We have restored what we loved and fixed the things which are broken.
- We feel confident we are prepared in the face of disaster.
- Through the recovery process, we have created opportunities that promote resilience, diversity, well-being, connectedness, and economic security.

Our Structure

MADRA is an incorporated association and a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We also have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status which enables donors to claim a tax deduction through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Our Stakeholders

A stakeholder is either an individual, group or organisation who is impacted by, or has an interest in, the outcome of a project or process.

Our major disaster recovery stakeholder groups are:

- community members including residents, property owners and visitors,
- our recovery delivery partners, and
- our recovery funding partners.

There is some crossover between our funding and delivery partners.

Our comprehensive stakeholder analysis at [Appendix B](#).

Community members and organisations impacted by the bushfires

This group of stakeholders includes:

- Community members directly impacted by the bushfires who:
 - lost homes or sustained property damage,
 - lost their livelihoods (jobs/income-producing assets),
 - have suffered mental and/or physical trauma,
 - are living with a disability,
 - have not yet come back to Mallacoota and District,
 - may lose their accommodation when rental agreements expire,
 - are living in pod homes, caravans, or other temporary accommodation,
 - residents who live near, and identify as being part of, Mallacoota and District but live in NSW, such as residents of Timbillica, and
 - reside in adjacent communities and who are also suffering.
- Businesses that lost trade, are suffering from cash flow issues, or may be forced to close.

- Clubs and associations which lost or suffered damage to buildings and equipment.
- Emergency service and other volunteers who may be suffering post-traumatic stress.
- Non-resident property owners.
- Visitors to our district.

Recovery Delivery Partners

Our primary recovery partners comprise both external and internal agencies and organisations including, but not limited to:

- Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV)
- EGSC
- The Victorian Department of Health (DH) and the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) - (two new departments replacing the former Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS))
- National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) which is now the National Resilience and Recovery Agency (NRRA)
- Red Cross
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)
- Local incorporated associations with applicable remits such as the Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association (MDBTA) and MDHSS.

Recovery Funding Partners

Our primary funding partners including, but not limited to:

- Our three levels of government: Commonwealth, state and local
- Philanthropic organisations
- Local charities
- Individual donors.

MADRA Subcommittees and Working Groups¹⁰

Local organisations are already in place with responsibility for many of the tasks associated with the recovery process. Our aim is not to duplicate their functions but to support them to maximise recovery opportunities, including working with Ministers and government agencies to identify funding opportunities and other mechanisms for progressing recovery initiatives.

The MADRA committee relies on community input and involvement in the formation of MADRA subcommittees and working groups. However, we recognise 2020 has taken a toll as the bushfires were followed by flash flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic. The willingness, energy and capacity to undertake volunteer work is not always there. If requests for subcommittees/working groups to identify local solutions for aspects of our recovery are not successful, the MADRA committee will collate concerns and suggestions and forward them to the relevant authorities seeking resolution.

¹⁰ At the time of writing

The following paragraphs describe past and current subcommittees and working groups.

Aboriginal Healing and Culture Subcommittee

This group is seeking to meet with regional representatives, traditional owners and other stakeholders.

Community Wellbeing Group

The focus of the Community Wellbeing Working Group focus was on health promotion, prevention, preparedness and supporting groups to meet the needs of people's wellbeing. The Community Wellbeing Group has now dissolved as much of the work being undertaken is in place or being continued by other groups.

Clarification around the primary actions are as follows:

Health encompasses physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Health promotion: "The process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health." (WHO). This may include education and courses like mental health first aid, tips and promotional events.

Prevention: Activities and processes aimed at reducing the risks associated with an illness. For example, planning localised large indoor spaces that would be available to communities with respiratory issues when smoke/pollen is an issue.

Preparedness: is having the resources in place, based on the community's emotional and physical needs, in consideration of the upcoming summer season plus other times. This will include supporting community providers to have resources and services available as required. To identify gaps in services, support community-based resources and outreach to regional providers.

Supporting groups with their actionable events that enhance social connection and health and wellbeing.

We acknowledge that social connection is imperative for the healing and recovery of our communities and that COVID has challenged us greatly in this process. We are aware not everyone has access to the internet and other communication devices and will work to ensure as many people within our communities have access to communications, services and supports as they become available and as COVID restrictions lift.

Housing Working Group

Many community members are still in temporary accommodation and face having to find alternative housing as rental agreements and insurance arrangements expire. In addition, tenants who did not lose anything to fires face being homeless as rental properties are sold to those who were flame affected. The Housing Working Group is working with DFFH, MDHSS, EGSC, Red Cross, Minderoo and Gippsland Lakes Complete Health (GLCH) to identify housing options for those homeowners and tenants who lost their primary place of residence to the bushfires.

Bushfire Commemoration Working Group

The Bushfire Commemoration Working Group looked at ways in which the community and visitors could respectfully and sensitively commemorate the significant first anniversary of the bushfires. This included working with local filmmaker Kristin Rule on the *One Year On*.

Buildings and Infrastructure Subcommittee

The Built Environment Subcommittee is work with EGSC, the Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management Inc. (Halls and Rec) and other organisations to identify and examine options for replacing and renewing community facilities and buildings. This includes examining infrastructure shortfalls and incorporating design improvements as part of the replacement process.

Another key role is looking at fire and future-proofing critical infrastructure, such as roads, energy, and communications.

Parks Infrastructure Working Group

The Parks Infrastructure Working Group is working with Parks Victoria and EGSC on replacement infrastructure – such as jetties and walking trails - with a view to improving access, amenity, and durability.

ADF Memorial Working Group

The ADF Memorial Working Group worked with community and EGSC to find a home for the memorial gifted by the ADF shortly after the fires. The memorial is located on the foreshore near the main wharf where so many locals and visitors gathered during the fires. Work on this project is ongoing as storyboards will accompany the memorial. Volunteers are needed to continue this project.

Mallacoota Sustainable Energy Group

The Mallacoota Sustainable Energy Group (MSEG) was formed in 2011 to identify and examine options for a reliable, sustainable, renewable energy supply for Mallacoota. Along with working on community post-bushfire energy resilience projects, MSEG's goal for the community is being TRiM (Totally Renewable in Mallacoota). See [Energy Projects](#) section in Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure.

Business and Economy

The Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association (MDBTA) is the lead organisation for business and tourism initiatives in our community. MADRA is working closely with MDBATA to explore opportunities for economic recovery ranging from immediate support to businesses to strategic projects and research.

Environment and Biodiversity Subcommittee

Projects undertaken by the Natural Environment subcommittee include weed removal, pest control, erosion control and revegetation projects. This work is being conducted in conjunction with Friends of Mallacoota and Envite.

The subcommittee sees the opportunity to educate and facilitate interest, love and passion for our biotic and abiotic components of our natural environment while highlighting our region's high conservation and biodiversity values.

In addition, the subcommittee supports and promotes sustainable tourism commensurate with our natural and community values, sustainable and renewable energy projects and scientifically backed, viable and well-resourced fuel management projects.

Mallacoota Bushfire Fuel Management Group

The purpose statement of the Mallacoota Bushfire Fuel Management Group is encapsulated in the table beneath.

Mallacoota Bushfire Fuel Management Group
<p>Acknowledgement:</p> <p>Climate change is a major influence on our forests and their flammability.</p> <p>Fuel Management is important for township protection but is only one of a suite of methods for improving the safety of our community.</p> <p>Purpose:</p> <p>The purpose of the Working Group is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a collaborative, ongoing bushfire fuel management plan that is environmentally and socially responsible, for the protection of the township of Mallacoota• The plan is to be tenure blind, ignoring boundaries between public and private land• Communicate the plan to land and fire management agencies and to the members of the Mallacoota community. Collaborate with MADRA. <p>The purpose is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• not to advise or comment on individual property plans• not to implement actions during bushfire events <p>Membership:</p> <p>Membership of the Working Group will include representative/s of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mallacoota community groups and individuals.• Mallacoota Fire Brigade• CFA Region• Parks Victoria• Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning & FFM Vic• East Gippsland Shire Council• Additional members may be invited or seconded as required.

Figure 2: Mallacoota Bushfire Fuel Management Group

Association Rules and Incorporation Working Group

The Association Rules and Incorporation Working Group was responsible for developing the Rules of Incorporation for the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association, overseeing the incorporation process, and obtaining PBI and DGR status. This work was undertaken in conjunction with our pro bono legal advisers Minter and Ellison.

Code of Conduct Working Group

The Code of Conduct Working Group developed a Code of Conduct that applies to the MADRA committee, Subcommittees and Working Groups.

Communications Working Group

The Communications Working Group is looking at the structures and mechanisms through which MADRA communicates within the association and more broadly.

Media Group

The Media Group provided advice and information on managing media requests, enquiries, and interviews, as well as preparing background media briefing notes, press releases and communication requirements. The Group also worked to provide consistent branding and build a distinct 'voice' for MADRA.

Our Communications Platforms

Our communication platforms are:

- Email: madra.3892@gmail.com
- Mail: Locked Bag 1005 Mallacoota Vic 3892
- Facebook MADRA
- Website: www.madrecovery.com
- Community Radio 3MGB

Chapter Two – Our Community

MALLACOOTA AND DISTRICT SNAPSHOT¹¹

Croajingolong National Park is central to our diverse district

- This 88 525ha Park includes coastal, heathland, eucalypt, and rainforest habitats
- It is home to 306 bird species, 52 mammal species and 26 reptile species, some of which are endangered.

We have the earliest fossil trackways of primitive tetrapods

- In 1972, the first backboned animals on land, dating back 350 million years, were found preserved in the Genoa River Gorge.

We live on traditional country of four indigenous nations

- Bidwal
- Gunnaijurnai
- Monero (Ngarigo)
- Yuin

We are an ageing community

- Nearly half our population is over 60.
- Our median age is around 58, compared with the Victorian median age of 37

We live in a community with many vulnerable people

- One-third lives alone
- 75% survive on either low or medium low income
- 22.3% of dwellings have no internet connection
- 5.6% of our population need assistance with core activities
- 4.5% have no motor vehicle

Employment is a challenge

- There are three main areas of employment in Mallacoota and district: education (35%), accommodation (31%) and seafood (19%)
- We have more part-time workers (50%) than full-time workers (40%)
- 10% of our potential workforce is unemployed

We are a DIY population

- 39.9% of our population is involved in volunteer work compared with 19% Australia-wide

Figure 3: Mallacoota and District Snapshot

¹¹Statistical information is from 2016 census data. Information from the 2021 census will be available in mid 2022.

Mallacoota and District

In this chapter, we paint a broad picture of our community – our history and geography, our demography, our critical infrastructure, and services. This information is provided for the purpose of supporting funding applications and assisting decision making.

Location

Situated in the far east of Victoria, our district comprises the townships of Mallacoota and Genoa and Gipsy Point and the settlements of Wangarabell, Maramingo Creek and the Wallagaraugh River catchment.

The Princes Highway passes through Genoa. The main road to Mallacoota is by turn off from the Princes Highway at Genoa. There are also four-wheel drive tracks from Mallacoota to the west. Gipsy Point can be reached via a two km turn off from the Genoa - Mallacoota Road. Wangarabell, Maramingo Creek and the Wallagaraugh River settlements lie off the Princes Highway.

Mallacoota is the most isolated town in the state of Victoria. The nearest large town is Eden in NSW (84km). The nearest Victorian townships are Cann River (71km) and Orbst (145km). Mallacoota is equidistant to Melbourne and Sydney (523 km to Melbourne and 526 km to Sydney via the Princes Highway).

History and Geography

The 87,500ha Croajingolong National Park is central to our diverse district and one of the most important conservation reserves in Victoria. The Park is home to 306 bird species, 52 mammal species and 26 reptile species, some of which are endangered.

At the northwest corner of the park, the Genoa Peak is 490 metres above sea level at the summit and the view at the top takes in the ocean and the top and bottom lakes, some 40 km away. The Genoa River Gorge contains late non-marine freshwater lake Devonian sediments with many fossils. In 1972, the earliest fossil trackways of primitive tetrapods - the first backboned animals on land - were found preserved in the Gorge, dating back 350 million years.¹²

The southern part of the park comprises wilderness beaches and estuarine lakes and river systems. Mallacoota Inlet itself is a submerged river valley with sedimentary filling over the last 3000-6000 years following the end of the last Ice Age which resulted in the formation of Bass Strait.¹³

Gabo Island is 14 km by sea from Mallacoota and is home to significant sea bird colonies including white-faced storm petrels. Gabo Island is home to a large breeding colony of Little Penguins.

¹² <https://museums victoria.com.au/website/melbournemuseum/discoverycentre/600-million-years/videos/fins-to-feet/index.html>

¹³ <https://www.ayton.id.au/wiki/doku.php?id=australia:vic:mallacoota>

Our First Nations people have a rich history in this region. Three indigenous nations continue their custodianship of the area now known as East Gippsland. These are the nations of the Bidwal, Gunnaikurnai and Monero (Ngarigo).¹⁴ Yuin country stretches from Mallacoota to southern NSW.¹⁵

Census studies from the 1840s indicate the presence of small groups of Maap or Bidawal people in Mallakoter (Mallacoota). Between 1830 and 1860, there are records of gatherings between the Maap and bordering Gunai and Monero groups.¹⁶

Sadly, European settlement from the 1840s saw the decline of the Maap population. This decline was a result of conflicts over settlement – our First Nations people never ceded sovereignty – and introduced diseases.

The first European settler in Mallacoota was Captain John Stevenson, a whaler who was granted a pastoral lease in 1841. Other pastoralists took up cattle runs in Mallacoota and Genoa up until the 1870s. Isolation prevented more widespread settlement.

Following the wreck of the Monumental City on Tullaberga Island in 1853, work began on the Gabo Island lighthouse in 1858. At 47m, the pink granite lighthouse is the second tallest lighthouse in Australia. The presence of the lighthouse enabled safer ocean access to the Mallacoota region and more settlers arrived.

In 1882 John Augustus Dorron established a home, farm, and hotel on the original Mallacoota site on the eastern side of the inlet. The Lakeview Hotel was a destination for visitors arriving by sea.

In the 1890s, gold was discovered. The rush soon petered out with the only successful mine being the Spotted Dog mine on the eastern side of the inlet.

In 1900, the Mallacoota National Park was established. This land now forms part of the Croajingolong National Park.

In 1909 the journalist and poet Edwin James Brady (1869-1952) established a writers' and artists' camp at Captain Stevenson's Point. The camp was attended by the poet Henry Lawson, author Katharine Susannah Prichard and playwright Louis Esson. The annual EJ Brady Short story competition recognises Mallacoota's long-standing literary and artistic traditions.

Access to our region was mostly by sea until an access road was built between Genoa and Mallacoota West (now the current site of Mallacoota) in 1918.

¹⁴ [https://mallacootaartscouncil.com.au/ej-brady-short-story-competition/https://www.geco.org.au/first_nations#:~:text=The%20land%20referred%20to%20as,Gunnaikurnai%20and%20Monero%20\(Ngarigo\).](https://mallacootaartscouncil.com.au/ej-brady-short-story-competition/https://www.geco.org.au/first_nations#:~:text=The%20land%20referred%20to%20as,Gunnaikurnai%20and%20Monero%20(Ngarigo).)

¹⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuin>

¹⁶ <http://savebastionpoint.org/bastion-point/history-of-the-area/>

During WW11, the RAAF set up an underground bunker coastal surveillance system at Mallacoota. One of the remaining bunkers is now a popular museum. A third bunker was discovered following the 2019-20 bushfires.

A Navy War Signal Station was established on Gabo Island with coastal surveillance as its main function. This was followed in 1942 by the RAAF No. 16 Radar Station, one of only five radar stations constructed in Victoria during WW11. The Radar Station was an important part of a chain of measures designed to protect a critical shipping route.

From early European settlement until now, tourism has been a mainstay of the Mallacoota and District economy. Another mainstay is the abalone industry which began in 1964.

Use of Statistics

While the accuracy of ABS data relies on the quality of input and is therefore not immutable, census statistics are one of the few ways we have for describing our demography. ABS statistics from the period 2006-16 are used to paint a baseline picture of our community.¹⁷

For the 2016 Census, the data used are from the Quick Stats product by ABS¹⁸ unless otherwise specified. Great care needs to be taken in comparing data from different products as the table populations or counting units may differ.) Care also needs to be taken with small numbers because of ABS measures to preserve confidentiality.¹⁹ In cases where small numbers can be problematic or misleading, statistics have been used from the locality of Mallacoota only.

The next ABS census is due in 2021. The 2021 census will also give some insight into how the 2019-20 bushfires, COVID-19 and related issues have altered our demography.

Tricia Hiley (community member and learner at large) provided the graphs and analysis pertaining to age profiles, household types, and vulnerability. We thank Tricia for her passion, insight, and the powerful visual depiction of our circumstances. Thank you also to Martin Butterfield (ex ABS Executive) for his advice on the use of statistics and for providing additional figures and analysis.

The entire area covered in this report as Mallacoota and District is made up of six State Suburbs (SSC) for the 2016 Census. They are shown in this map from the ABS Table Builder website. For more detailed information regarding the composition of the Mallacoota SSC in previous census years see [Changes to Mallacoota and District State Suburbs \(SSC\)](#) in Appendix C.

¹⁷ Up until 2016, the area shows for “Mallacoota” only included the built-up area of the town centre, with the element to the east of the bottom lake included with Genoa, Gipsy Point, Maramingo Creek, Wallagaraugh and Wangarabell under the label ‘Genoa’.

¹⁸ <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/2016%20QuickStats>

¹⁹ In addition, this can result in different extractions of the same table containing slightly different results (which should not affect the overall utility of the data).



Figure 4: Murrumbidgee and District State Suburbs ABS 2016 Census

Demography

An Ageing Population

The 2016 census shows the population of Murrumbidgee and District as 1166 (Murrumbidgee 1063, Genoa 55, Gipsy Point 19, Murrumbidgee Creek 17, Wallagarragh 3 and Wangarabell 9).

We are one of the most elderly communities in Victoria – in 2016 the median of Victorians was 37. At the same time, the median age of our communities was Murrumbidgee 58, Genoa 60, Wangarabell 66, and Murrumbidgee Creek 57. In 2016, nearly half of our total population was over 60, nearly one quarter was over the age of 70 and around one-seventh was over the age of 75.

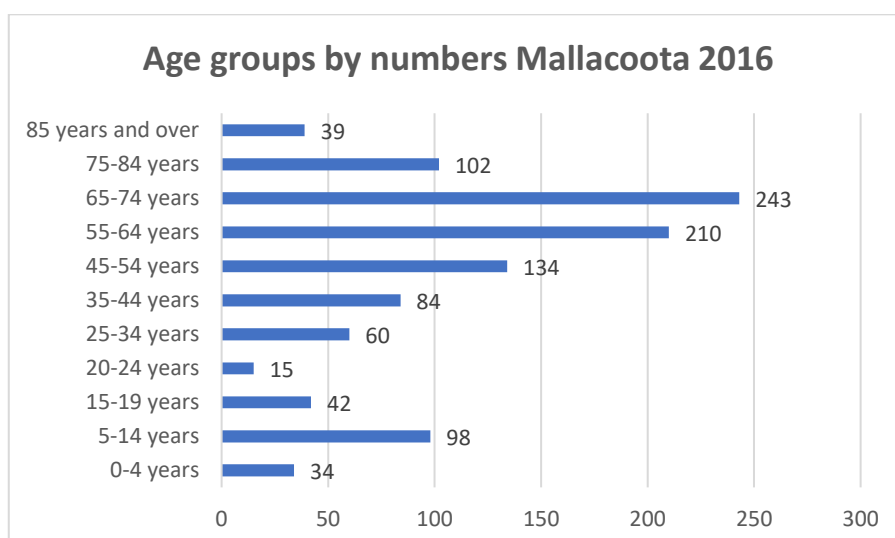


Figure 5: Age Groups by Number Murrumbidgee 2016

See also [Comparison of 10-year Age Group Profiles -Mallacoota and District/Victoria](#) in Appendix C.

The chart beneath provides an additional visual depiction of our ageing community.

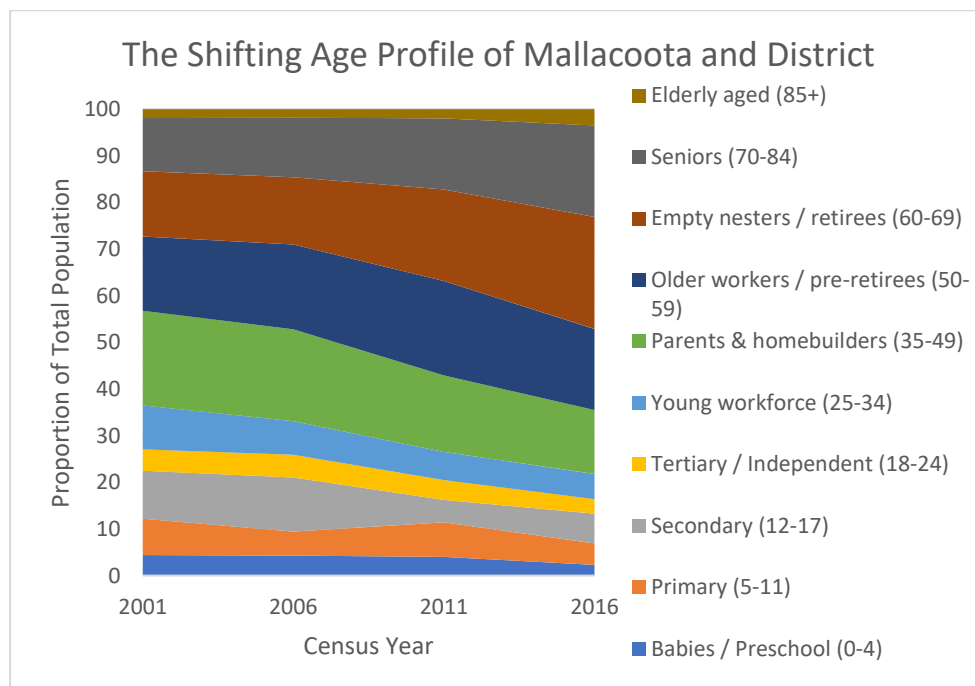


Figure 6: The Shifting Age Profile of Mallacoota and District

A Vulnerable Population

Most of the households in our district are made up of single-person households in or a single family formed by a couple with no children.

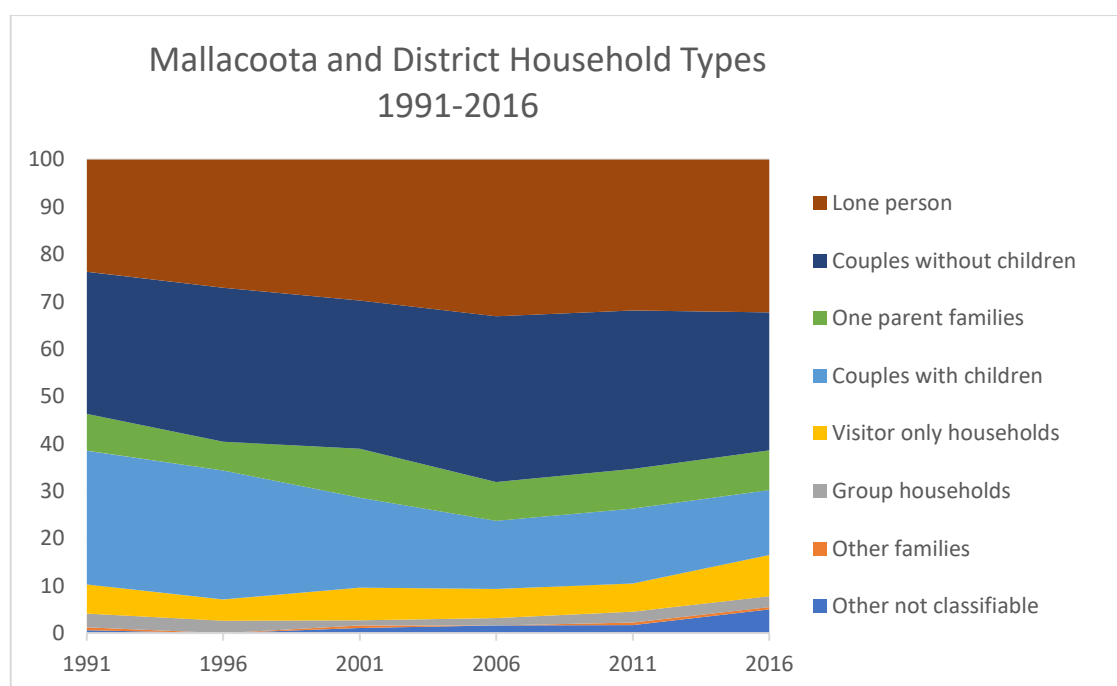


Figure 7: Mallacoota and District Household Types 1991-2016

In a world increasingly reliant on electronic means of communication, just over one-fifth (22.3%) of our dwellings do not have an internet connection. 5.6% of our population need assistance with core activities and 4.5% of dwellings had no motor vehicle on Census night.

These factors can interact to make issues more pronounced. By way of example:

1. Only 58.9% of single-person dwellings indicated that the internet was accessed from the dwelling while for other household types the % was 83%.
2. 88 % of dwellings without a motor vehicle were single-person households.

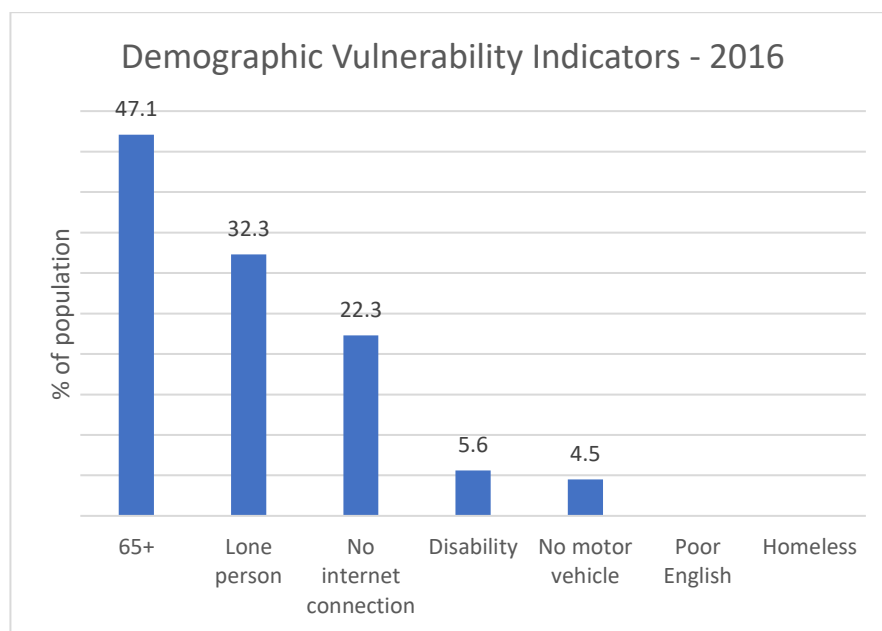


Figure 8: Demographic Vulnerability Indicators 2016²⁰

Housing

A total of 123 houses were destroyed in Mallacoota and District during the fires. In addition to the heartbreak of losing homes, this has caused a shortfall of rental properties. Not only is this a problem for residents requiring accommodation, but there is also a shortfall of housing for external tradespeople and service providers engaged in our rebuilding and recovery. In addition, the cessation of the COVID-19 rental moratorium on the 31st of March 2021 means several residents have received eviction notices, further exacerbating the housing shortfall.

²⁰ 'This (graph) selects seven measures ... used to define 'vulnerable people' in our work and shows the percentage of the population in your Local Government Area that would meet each of the seven criteria. This basic-level of analysis will help anyone understand which demographic characteristics most contribute to the overall vulnerability of your community.' Cited 25/06/2020 on <https://blog.id.com.au/2020/population/demographic-trends/interactive-chart-is-your-community-demographically-vulnerable/>

Education

We have a good mix of higher education levels and skills attainment.

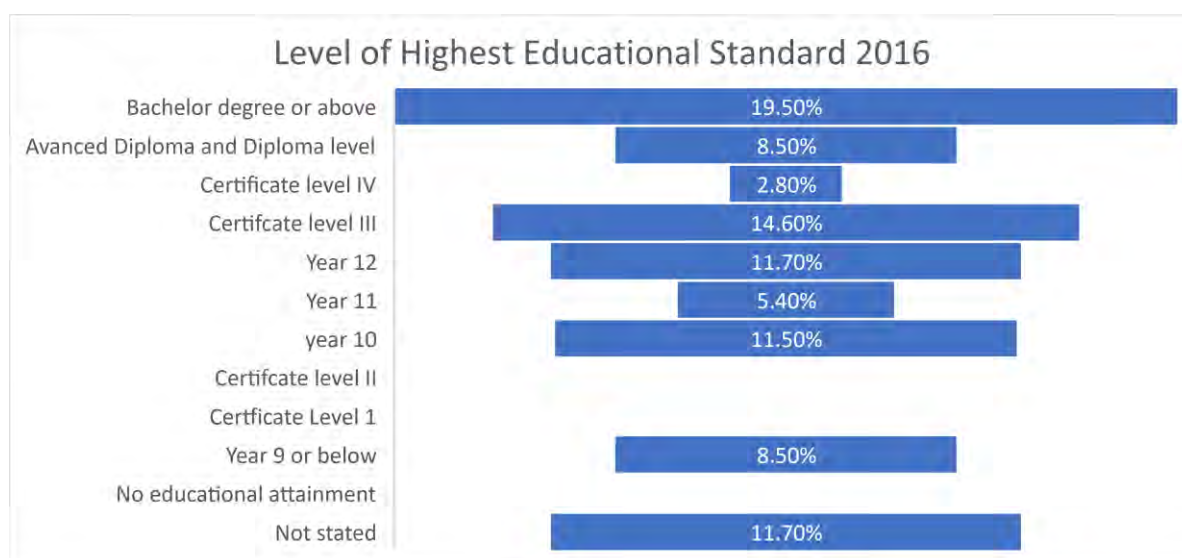
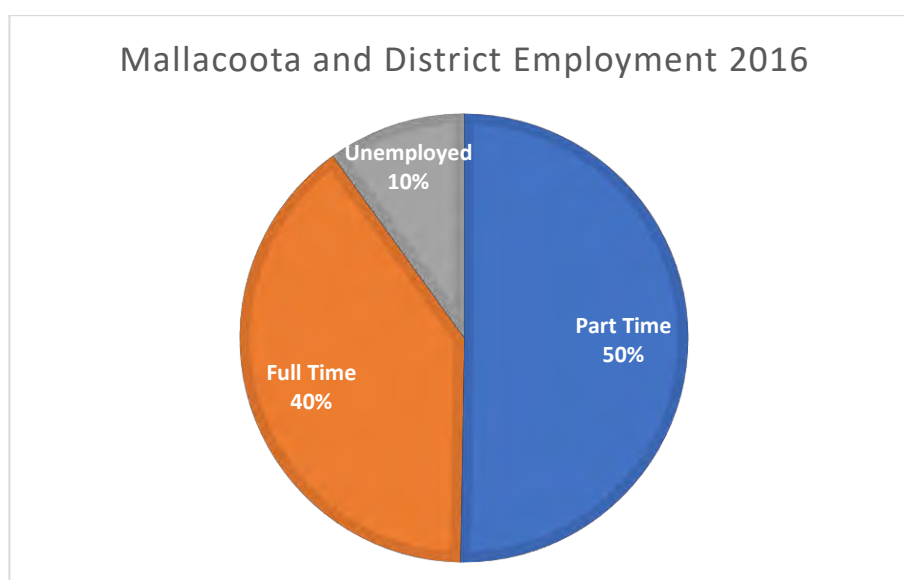


Figure 9: Level of Highest Educational Standard 2016

Employment

As of 2016, our unemployment rate was 10%²¹. Underemployment is potentially an issue – 50% of our population works part-time compared with 33% of Victorians. What the statistics do not show is the degree to which casual and seasonal work is a feature of our social and economic circumstances. The statistics also do not reveal the extent to which part-time work is by choice or because of a lack of full-time opportunities.



²¹ Employment in Mallacoota in August (of any year) is likely to be very different to employment in December and January (of any year). However, there are no measures of employment in peak months to offer a comparison.

Figure 10: Mallocoota and District Level of Employment 2016

As of 2016, our main areas of employment are education, accommodation and the seafood industry.

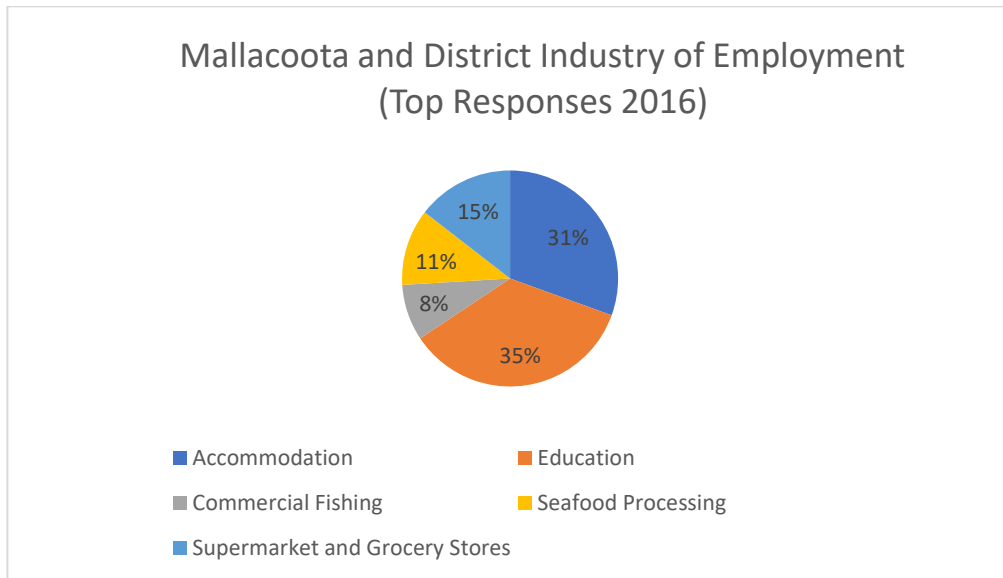
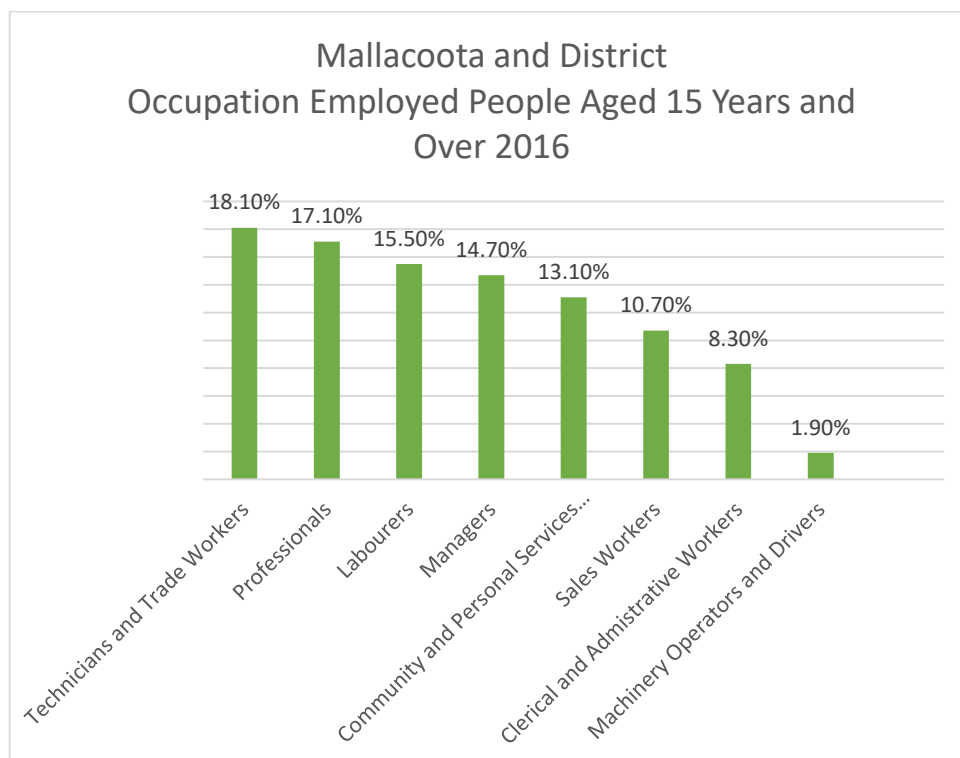


Figure 11: Mallocoota and District Industry of Employment (Top Responses 2016)

We have a good spread of trades, professions, and skills within our population.



A Community of Volunteers

We are a community of volunteers. 39.9% of our population is involved in volunteer work compared with 19% of Australians. Over 30% of our volunteer workforce is over the age of 60.

For a breakdown of volunteers by age distribution and age group in Mallacoota (town) compared with the rest of Australia see [The Relationship between Age and Volunteering – Mallacoota/Australia](#) in Appendix C.

The high level of volunteerism speaks to distance and isolation. However, when considered in the context of an ageing population, the reliance on volunteerism is unsustainable. This is particularly true for our volunteer emergency services: CFA, SES, Coast Guard, AV and Red Cross.

Social Capital

Social capital is defined as ‘the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.’²²

There are over 65 sporting, social, and charitable organisations in our district. These organisations are playing a strong role in our recovery through ongoing social connections and networks.

For a list of community organisations, see [Mallacoota and District Community Groups and Organisations](#) in Appendix B.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Descent

Eight people in our district identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Our Values

Our values are articulated in two key documents: the 2007 Mallacoota Urban Design Framework²³ and the April 2020 Snapshot Survey (see [Appendix D – Snapshot Survey](#))

2007 Vision – Mallacoota Urban Design Framework

The 2007 Mallacoota Urban Design Framework outlines a Vision for Mallacoota to be realised over the following 15-20 years:

‘Mallacoota will remain a peaceful town connected to the surrounding natural environment, including the inlet and National Parks.

²² https://www.google.com.au/search?source=hp&ei=IZ1MX_KkKrGE4-EP46GH4Ag&q=what+is+social+capital&oq=what+is+social+capital&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQDFAAWABg0gloAHAAeACAAQCIACSAQCQAQdnd3Mtd2l6&scient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwiyuY3F7MTrAhUxwigGHePQAYwQ4dUDCAQ

²³ Available at https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Community/Plans_and_Projects/Mallacoota_and_District

It will have a lively, walkable community centre, linking activity to the foreshore and wharf area. There will be sufficient community facilities for resident and visitor needs and pedestrian and bicycle links will enhance access throughout the town.

Building design, materials and appropriate planting will reflect the coastal character of the town's setting. Mallacoota's setting within a wilderness area will be recognised and the town's environmental tourism role will further develop in a sustainable manner.

Coastal related industries will be encouraged to support the town's economy.'

April 2020 Snapshot Survey.

In April 2020, the Thinking Group conducted a snapshot survey to understand community values and priorities post the bushfires. 66 people responded to the survey.

Key findings are:

- A love of our diverse, unspoilt wilderness landscape.
- An appreciation of our small, supportive communities.
- Collective post-bushfire trauma exacerbated by individual and collective loss of homes, amenities, and infrastructure.
- The importance of social connections and community get-togethers to restore a sense of community.
- Understanding that tensions exist within our communities, which will need to be considered in the recovery process.
- A need for funding support for both individuals and businesses to turn around the local economy and make good economic losses.
- A desire for greater economic diversity, including a desire to balance tourism with the wishes of permanent residents.
- The need for a master plan to manage our natural environment which balances maximising biodiversity and enhancing fire safety.
- The importance of rebuilding homes to appropriate standards and the interim need for comfortable accommodation for the displaced.
- The need for a strategic approach to rebuilding and extending community infrastructure including communications (internet), emergency facilities, energy, water, recreational, sporting, educational and aged care facilities.
- A recognition of the amplifying effects of COVID-19 on top of bushfire trauma and the need for safe ways to connect and communicate.
- A recognition of the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 on both individuals and businesses.

Critical Infrastructure and Services

Emergency Services

Mallacoota has the following volunteer Emergency Services organisations:

- CFA
- SES
- Ambulance Victoria (AV) comprising Ambulance Community Officers (ACOs) who act as first responders and a Paramedic Community Support Coordinator.
- Australian Red Cross (to cease mid-2021?)

- Coastguard
- Mallacoota Surf Life Saving Club Inc.

During the fires, the CFA, SES, AV, and Red Cross organisations were supplemented by external permanent and volunteer staff from those organisations, together with additional vehicles and other resources.

Health Services

Mallacoota and District Health & Support Service (MDHSS)

MDHSS is a charitable not-for-profit health service that offers a range of services including allied health, district nurse and other services. During the bushfires, MDHSS transformed to a relief and recovery centre maintaining existing services and hosting visiting agencies, such as DHHS.²⁴ MDHSS holds a list of vulnerable people.

Mallacoota Medical Centre

The Mallacoota Medical Centre is a privately-owned medical practice that offers both medical and nursing services, health planning and care advice.²⁵ The practice has two doctors.

Aerodrome

Mallacoota has a public airport²⁶ that has both gravel and asphalt runways.

The primary sealed runway 18/36 has Low Intensity Runway Lighting (LIRL) with Pilot Activated Lighting (PAL) and is 1,028 metres long and 18 metres wide. Additional facilities on the Airport include a terminal building, three privately owned hangars, and a DELWP Airbase.²⁷

The Airport operates within uncontrolled Class G airspace and has several published Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) routes based on these aids connect Mallacoota with Devonport, Flinders Island, St Helens, East Sale, Melbourne, Cooma, Merimbula, and other airports in south-eastern Australia.

The refuelling facilities provide 24/7 self-service Avgas and Jet A1 fuel with credit card payment options. The fuel facility is operated by Aero Refuellers.²⁸

The Port of Mallacoota

The Port of Mallacoota²⁹ is a small waterway adjacent to the small township of Mallacoota, with an entrance to Bass Strait. The entrance closes from time to time. The entrance has had to be opened by bulldozer twice in recent times.

²⁴ <https://www.mallacoota.org.au/about-mdhss/>

²⁵ http://www.mallacootamedicalcentre.com.au/?page_id=971

²⁶ International Air Transport Association (IATA) location identifier XMC, International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO): YMCO

²⁷ <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/aerodromes/mallacoota-airport>

²⁸ <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/aerodromes/mallacoota-airport>

²⁹ <https://www.gippslandports.vic.gov.au/ports-and-waterways/ports-and-waterways/mallacoota-inlet/>

The Port of Mallacoota includes the waters of Mallacoota Inlet and stretches upstream to the Genoa and Wallagaraugh Rivers and is enclosed by the Croajingalong National Park. The port waters also extend into Bass Strait to the tip of Bastion Point.

In 2015, the East Gippsland Shire completed the construction of new dual-lane boat ramp and breakwater at Bastion Point and along with associated aids to navigation to provide a safer and more sheltered vessels launch area.

Navigational Information: Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules (VOZR) Schedule 109 Local Port of Mallacoota Inlet

The entrance channel leading into the inlet changes in position and depth and its navigation is dangerous without local knowledge. Notices to Mariners (NTMs) state extreme caution should be exercised from Captain Stevenson's Point to the Entrance. This vicinity is extremely shallow even at high water, with large sand banks and weed areas. Vessel operators are advised to proceed at a slow speed during daylight hours only and remain observant.

The Bastion Point boat ramp provides direct access to Bass Strait. Mariners must exercise due diligence in using this launching facility and plan their departure and return to coincide with favourable conditions. A webcam is accessible from the Mallacoota Webcam page located on the Gippsland Ports website during daylight hours.³⁰ At the time of writing, the webcam is not in operation.

The Bastion Point boat ramp was used to ferry people and goods during the bushfires and thereafter as the entrance to the Port of Mallacoota was closed.

EGSC manages the Bastion Point ramp and jetty, the Mallacoota township boat ramp, the Gipsy Point boat ramp and jetty and the Karbeethong boat ramp and floating jetty.

Responsibility for all in water and on land navigation aids, tide and compass piles, all swing mooring areas, the Mallacoota boat ramp floating jetty, Mallacoota wharf, Mallacoota slipway and jetty, Gipsy Point jetty and Karbeethong jetty rests with Gippsland Ports.

Parks Victoria manages the jetties located at: Cemetery Bight, Kingfish Point, The Narrows, South West Arm, Goanna Bay, Allan Head, Captain Creek, Cape Horn, Genoa River and Gravelly Point.

Emergency Power

AusNet has installed a one-megawatt battery with a backup diesel generator in Mallacoota, at a site near the water treatment plant. The battery is expected to be operational by the end of April 2021.

Water Supply

East Gippsland Water sources drinking water for Mallacoota from the Betka River and ground water bores. The Mallacoota Water Treatment Plant came into operation in 1997 and can treat up to 1.2 million litres of water per day, the equivalent of water held by 1.2 Olympic sized swimming pools.

³⁰ <https://www.gippslandports.vic.gov.au/boating/webcams/mallacoota/>

The off-season population of Mallacoota is roughly 1,100 people, but this can increase up to 10,000 people during the peak summer season. In 2011, two new production bores were installed to supplement the town's drinking water supply. Water is pumped from the Betka River via a pipeline into a 41 million litre raw water storage basin. During times of low river flow, groundwater is accessed from the two bores and added to the raw water basin.³¹

3MGB Community Radio (Mallacoota 101.7 Genoa 96.9)

A learning from the 1983 bush fires was the need for better communications to keep everyone up to date in emergency situations. The community decided the best solution was to establish a local radio station. In 1992, 3MGB received a community broadcasting licence for Mallacoota and Genoa.

The Victorian government has formal arrangements in place with media outlets to broadcast emergency warnings and information to the community in a standardised and structured way. In 2016, 3MGB was successful in gaining the status of Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) emergency broadcaster. Emergency broadcasters must meet a range of criteria before qualifying for this role and presenters are required to undergo training. Emergency broadcasters are required to interrupt normal programming to announce emergency warnings and provide timely and consistent information updates. 3MGB acted as an emergency broadcaster during the 2019-20 bushfires.

Technology has moved on now and the need for 3MGB to act as an emergency broadcaster has lessened. With the experience of the 2019-20 fires, the significant impost on volunteer time and wellbeing, the situation where only two out of 14 trained volunteers were able to attend the studio in the 24 hours before the fire front hit, Mallacoota Genoa Broadcasting Association has withdrawn its services as an EMV emergency broadcaster. However, 3MGB will continue to broadcast emergency information from all credible sources to its listeners during times of emergency.

Victorian Integrated Warnings System

Victoria has an integrated warnings system to provide the community with access to timely information for emergencies across multiple channels.

This includes:

- ABC Gippsland
- the Vic Emergency website www.emergency.vic.gov.au,
- the VicEmergency app and
- the VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226.

³¹ <https://www.egwater.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MCootaWTP2017.pdf#:~:text=East%20Gippsland%20Water%20sources%20drinking%20water%20for%20Mallacoota,water%20held%20by%201.2%20Olympic%20sized%20swimming%20pools.>

Chapter Three – Our Bushfire Recovery Framework

Our bushfire recovery framework is driven by:

- Our understanding of what is meant by community-led recovery.
- Our bushfire recovery priorities
- Our community consultation process.
- Bushfire recovery pillars.
- Legal and funding arrangements.
- Future disaster management and recovery arrangements arising from government inquiries into the bushfires.

What is Community-led Recovery?

In the past, the experience of some communities is input into government-led proposals has been sought or volunteered but ultimately has not been reflected in the final product. The reasons and context for a lack of local tailoring are often not explained and solutions feel imposed and less than optimal. The resulting frustration has led to the desire for genuine community-led recovery.³²

There is no one framework or formula for community-led recovery as every community is unique. At its heart, community-led recovery is about communities identifying problems and proposing solutions based on local knowledge, preferences, and priorities.

Our community-led bushfire recovery process is shaped by factors including:

- Our understanding of our community, its circumstances, needs, values and aspirations.
- Our ability as a community to embrace, implement and sustain opportunities and initiatives.
- Understanding the broader economic, social, and environmental conditions which influence bushfire recovery and using that knowledge to identify recovery opportunities going forward.
- Thinking ‘outside the box’ by putting forward solutions driven by local knowledge and being able to demonstrate how community proposed solutions can lead to better outcomes including safety, durability, resilience, and cost-effectiveness.
- Our willingness to engage in respectful and productive debate about what can be achieved in the recovery space.
- Anticipating and identifying potential blockages and objections to recovery proposals and offering viable alternatives.
- Drawing on the skills and knowledge of our community.
- A willingness to respectfully engage with the response and recovery agencies.
- Working with funding and service delivery partners to deliver optimal outcomes.

³² (Moreton, 2018) ‘Community Resilience and Community Led Recovery: One is Reality, the Other an Achievable Goal’ 2017 Australian & New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference.

- Utilising and leveraging our many community networks for action, information, and advice.
- Our capacity as volunteers.

Community-led recovery is also about advocacy. Our advocacy role is about influencing those ideas and initiatives which are not community led – such as government processes and policies - and ‘sticking up’ for individuals, organisations and our community as needed.

Two Years On - What Have We Learned?

Community-led recovery is not a ‘magic bullet’. We do not control the purse strings, nor do we have the authority to approve projects or policy changes. We are not a fourth arm of government.

The authority we do have is that vested in us by our community to speak on their behalf. With this comes the responsibility to consult with community members and groups and to communicate community priorities and preferences to the government agencies and philanthropic organisations which can make things happen.

We’ve learned that not all community members want to engage in community-led recovery and that some community members fear community-led recovery will lead to unwelcome change. To this end, we’ve adopted a values-based approach to our recovery based on our mutual love of our people and the desire of community to keep our pristine wilderness environment. Others are assured that MADRA is ‘getting on with it’ and that progress is being made, albeit not as fast as we would like.

We’ve learned the importance of developing collaborative, respectful and productive relationships with our funding and service delivery partners. Many people are working hard on our behalf. There are times, however, when our recovery partners themselves do not have the authority to deliver. In such cases, we will escalate to the relevant Minister. Another avenue of escalation is seeking media attention to unresolved issues.

We’ve learned the importance of having a community endorsed Recovery Plan and a comprehensive Voting Report. These documents provide the context for our recovery strategies and evidence of community preferences and priorities. Having a community voice is powerful. Not having a community voice means recovery solutions will be imposed.

We’ve learned community-generated solutions to recovery issues are often more cost-effective, fit for purpose and enduring than imposed solutions. Local knowledge, experience and history means we know where to ‘hit it with the shifter’ to get it working again. Community generated solutions also reflect community values.

We’ve learned that the ‘more heads the better’ and that we have a talented, diverse community. Many community members have offered their skills and insight and their contribution is very much appreciated. When we work collaboratively together, we generate synergies and, importantly, results.

We’ve learned the worst we can be told is “no”. We must be aspirational for our community as we can compromise but not bargain up.

We’ve learned there are no guidelines for what is in or out of scope for bushfire recovery.

Our Recovery Priorities

Our aim is to prioritise recovery initiatives in terms of need and funding availability.

We have grouped recovery projects into three timeframes: Right Now, Short Term (two to three years) and Strategic (Our Vision and beyond).

Right Now

The most compelling problem we face is an ongoing shortfall in housing. See [Housing](#) section in Chapter Six People and Wellbeing.

In addition to housing, our immediate and ongoing priorities are:

- Using our friendships and networks to ensure no one slips between the recovery cracks.
- Identifying gaps and shortfalls in recovery service delivery and advocating for affected individuals, groups, and organisations with the responsible authorities.
- Working with emergency services groups and agencies on disaster preparedness including infrastructure, services, community education and plans (including local emergency and fuel management plans).
- Working with agencies on designs for, and timely replacement of infrastructure.
- Conveying community concerns, issues, and preferences to our local elected representatives.
- Planning how to restore and protect our natural environment and cultural and historical assets.
- Working with philanthropic organisations re possible uses for donations and gifts.
- Working with our funding and service delivery partners with the aim of the 'right help in the right place at the right time'.
- Where possible, managing media interest in our bushfire recovery to reduce trauma and protect privacy.

At the same time, we also must 'make hay while the sun shines' with available grant and donation opportunities that have an application expiry date. This means matching projects and initiatives with funding opportunities.

Short Term (Two to Three Years)

Our next set of priorities moves beyond replacement and repair. Projects derive from bushfire 'lessons learned' and include:

- Infrastructure and services which were not in place during the bushfires and are needed in the event of future disasters.
- Initiatives for enhancing our social connections and networks.
- Projects and initiatives for strengthening our local economy.
- Building resilience.

Strategic (Our Vision and Beyond)

As the recovery process unfolds, our priorities start to shift from immediate recovery needs to longer-term resilience. These longer-term projects have a longer incubation period and

require extensive community consultation and commitment. Some require a structured implementation approach; others will be more organic in nature.

Mission Creep

Funding has become funding available for items that we might not have characterised as urgent or critical to our recovery, such as street scaping. Noting this, we sought advice from BRV and our legal advisors as to what is 'in scope' for bushfire/disaster recovery. The bottom line is, there is no clear answer.

We have this once in a generation opportunity for investment in our district. We need to grasp this chance to fire and future proof our district as much as possible. We figure 'we've got to be in it to win it'

Community Consultation

When MADRA was established, we realised that we had to get moving quickly on 'non-discretionary' recovery priorities including people supports, housing, fuel management, replacement/upgrading of critical emergency and economic infrastructure, and re-establishing a sense of community through social events and connections.

At the same time, we asked our community to submit their suggestions for our recovery. These suggestions build on our ongoing core recovery effort.

The purpose of our initial community consultation process was to obtain a solid list of projects we are confident has community backing. This is so when governments and donors ask, "what does your community want?", we can hand over our endorsed Recovery Plan.

In 2020 and early 2021, COVID-19 precluded large community meetings. In lieu, draft Recovery Plan chapters were put out to community for comment via the Mallacoota Mouth and email. Hard copies were made available at the Genoa Pub and Mallacoota Bushfire Recovery Hub. Summary versions of the draft Recovery Plan chapters were also made available via the same mediums.

We also met with smaller groups to discuss needs and priorities as COVID restrictions allowed.

When COVID-19 restrictions eased, we commenced our face-to-face community consultation. This started with opening sessions in March 2021 in Genoa and Mallacoota. The purpose of these sessions was to outline the community consultation process going forward. A video presentation on the community consultation process was shown and is available at madrecovery.com.

During the period April to May 2021, two sessions each on each Recovery Pillar were held at the Mallacoota Community Clubrooms. The exception was Aboriginal Healing and Culture which is dependent on opportunities to consult with traditional owners.

The purpose of these sessions was twofold:

1. To enable community members to discuss recovery ideas with the MADRA committee and representatives from pertinent community associations and relevant agencies.

2. To ask community members to vote 'Yes' or 'No' to recovery project ideas that had not already commenced and to list their project priorities.³³

Voting forms were also available via the Mallacoota Mouth and at the Genoa Pub and Mallacoota Bushfire Recovery Hub. A Community Consultation 'Question and Answer' and Voting 'Question and Answer' documents were developed to provide information on the consultation process. These documents are available on madrecovery.com.

The voting process enabled us to determine outline those projects which have community endorsement, those which need more work, and those which are not agreed. This Plan was updated to reflect these outcomes and the status changed from 'draft' to 'endorsed'.

We asked community members to vote for several reasons:

- So, community's thoughts could be heard and shared
- So, we know which projects have the most support – as volunteers with limited capacity we need to know where to focus our efforts.
- So, we could further shape the nature of projects based on your insights and comments.

We knew not all projects could be funded and some projects might be funded from the same finite 'bucket of money' – we therefore needed to understand community priorities. Voting results were compiled by an independent person. The top 25 voting priorities across the pillars of People and Wellbeing, Buildings and Infrastructure, Business and Economy, and Environment and Biodiversity are summarised in [Appendix E – Mallacoota and District Voting Priorities](#). The full Voting Report is available on our madrecovery.com.

A final community consultation session was held in June 2021 in Mallacoota. The aim of this session was to outline achievements to date, detail the voting results and discuss 'where next'? At this time, we changed the status of this Recovery Plan from 'draft' to 'endorsed'. A copy of both the presentation and the transcript is available on madrecovery.com.

[An Ongoing Recovery Story...](#)

Of course, there is no 'cut off' point for our recovery. Our recovery story is ongoing. Projects and initiatives will be implemented. New ideas will emerge. New funding programs and other opportunities will arise.

We envisage the Recovery Plan will be updated on a regular basis to reflect what has been achieved and priorities going forward. New ideas will be incorporated, and community members will be offered the chance to vote on them.

Over two years on from the bushfires and the language is shifting from 'recovery' to 'resilience'. Effectively, this Recovery Plan has become a Mallacoota and District Town Plan containing both recovery and resilience elements.

³³ Information on projects already underway was included at the end of the voting forms for each Pillar.

Bushfire Recovery Pillars

The BRV State Recovery framework has five lines of recovery depicted in the table beneath. These lines of recovery have also been adopted by our other major service delivery and funding party, EGSC.

Bushfire Recovery Victoria Recovery Pillars	
Aboriginal Healing and Culture	Prioritising culture, addressing trauma, and supporting healing, promoting cultural safety and promoting participation and ownership.
People and Wellbeing	Safety and security, health and well-being and social cohesion and community connection.
Buildings and Infrastructure	Utilities, public infrastructure and residential and commercial buildings.
Business and economy	Industry and business, employment, community resilience and regional infrastructure.
Environment and biodiversity	Biodiversity, amenity and natural resources.

Figure 13: Bushfire Recovery Victoria Recovery Pillars

Considerations

MADRA Working Groups and Subcommittees generally have a functional focus in line with the five BRV recovery pillars. Notwithstanding, a holistic approach across all pillars is necessary.

We apply the following considerations across all our activities:

- Is this project/action compatible across all our social, environmental (built and natural), cultural and economic values?
- Does this project/action complement other MADRA projects/activities?
- What are the intended consequences of this project/activity? What might be the unintended consequences? (Trajectory planning).
- How do we define success? (Measurable outcomes and outputs - both qualitative and quantitative).
- Have we considered the needs of all our stakeholder groups?
- Have we considered the needs of all members of our community in terms of ability, age, stage, vulnerability, and culture?
- Do we need to seek expert advice before proposing a course of action?
- How do we consult our community?

Legal and Funding Arrangements

Our mandate is bushfire recovery and any formal funding assistance we seek needs to establish a bushfire recovery link.

We have gone down the path of being a charitable organisation with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status as it allows us to access a wider range of donations and assistance than would be possible had we just been an incorporated association.

As a charitable organisation with DGR status, we must focus our endeavours on bushfire recovery. We are liable to disciplinary action from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) if we cannot establish a clear link.

To ensure we are on the right track, we sought legal advice on the content of this Recovery Plan. The advice we received is that most of the initiatives herein can be linked to bushfire recovery.

Our strategy is to deliver on bushfire recovery initiatives now while funding is available for those purposes. This is not to dismiss community ideas for which a bushfire recovery link might be perceived as tenuous by funding bodies. We envisage MADRA may eventually morph into a broader community organisation (without DGR status) that can address a broader range of initiatives. This is implicit in our vision for Mallacoota and District as ‘an inclusive, vibrant, strong and safe community.’

This does not mean some of the ‘big ideas’ put forward by our community will not be pursued. Wherever possible, we will support community organisations that have a mandate and the desire to undertake such projects. Many of these projects will be long term and require extensive community consultation and an enduring owner (for example, EGSC).

Future Disaster Management and Recovery Arrangements

Several high-level investigations into the 2019-20 bushfires have taken place.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report was tabled in Parliament on 30th October 2020. This will have implications for disaster preparedness and recovery. A key recommendation is for a scalable national approach to resilience and recovery to improve both preparedness and responsiveness.

One outcome of the Royal Commission is the establishment of the National Resilience and Recovery Agency (NRRA).

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) is a Victorian Agency. On 14th January 2020, the State government announced an independent inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season would be conducted by IGEM.

Phase one of the IGEM inquiry focused on community and sector preparedness for and response to the 2019-20 fire season. The IGEM report has been tabled and all 17 recommendations accepted by the Victorian Government.³⁴ Recommendations include the need to:

- Clarify legislative and organisational responsibilities and processes for bushfire preparedness and combat,
- Greater community engagement to increase community awareness of fuel management.
- Review and enhance evacuation planning and processes.
- Maximising the capability and capacity of cross border agencies to work together during emergencies.

³⁴ https://files.igem.vic.gov.au/2021-03/Inquiry%20into%202019%2020%20Victorian%20Fire%20Season_Summary%20Report_Phase%201.pdf

Phase two of the inquiry will directly impact our recovery efforts as it focuses on the progress and effectiveness of Victoria's immediate relief and recovery arrangements concerning the 2019-20 fire season. Matters for consideration include:

- Effectiveness of immediate relief and recovery work and arrangements including at the regional and incident levels.
- Creation of Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) and the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) – now superseded by the NRRRA -and how these entities will work together for the benefit of affected Victorian communities, including consideration of long terms efforts directed at social, economic (including small business, tourism, and agricultural sectors) and environmental recovery.
- Effectiveness of how roles and responsibilities for recovery have been divided between Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and BRV.

The IGEM Phase 2 Inquiry report was tabled by leave in Parliament in October 2021. The report contains 15 recommendations on a range of relief and recovery issues including communications, infrastructure, agency interactions, impact assessment, governance and how to incorporate local organisations and volunteers in overall relief and recovery arrangement. Government accepted all 15 recommendations. The eventual implementation of these recommendations of these investigations will shape our disaster recovery and preparedness and will be incorporated into this plan when details are available.

Chapter Four – Needs Assessment and Recovery Strategies

In this chapter, we undertake a broad needs assessment from the perspective of community-led recovery. In other words, our assessment of our needs ‘right now’ and going forward.

What is a Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is a systematic process for determining or addressing needs or ‘gaps’ between current and desired conditions.³⁵ A key component in the management of a disaster recovery program within any community is an assessment of needs following the disaster.

Effective recovery programs are led by sound knowledge and evidence of community needs as well as capacities and strengths. This includes analysis of the impacts of disaster, community needs and the collective capacity of community to address these needs.³⁶

Needs Assessment Purpose

This needs assessment provides the context and rationale for our recovery strategies and for the recovery projects detailed in Chapters Five to Nine.

The opportunity exists to make Mallacoota and District safer and more resilient; to not only recreate those things we loved but to reinforce our sense of place through the creation of stronger connections, better infrastructure, and new things to love.

Our Needs Assessment Process

Our needs assessment process is based on:

- Community ideas and suggestions for bushfire recovery.
- Our understanding of recovery gaps and shortfalls.
- Stakeholder analysis. See [Appendix B – Stakeholder Analysis](#).
- Analysis of the external factors and trends which will shape our recovery initiatives.
- The capacity of our community to absorb, implement and sustain recovery initiatives.

³⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Needs_assessment

³⁶ <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/toolkit/Community-Recovery-Toolkit-Recovery-Needs-and-Capacity-Assessment.pdf>

Community Input

In July 2020 we kickstarted a community brainstorming process by holding a MADRA committee brainstorm. The aim was to get ideas for bushfire recovery and to identify any gaps in recovery services and infrastructure.

COVID19 restrictions prevented us from having a town meeting so the results of the committee brainstorm were posted in the windows of the Bushfire Recovery Hub in Maurice Ave. Another set of documents was forwarded to the Genoa pub. Paper copies of the documents were also available. Community members were invited to add to the list via email or letter. MADRA suggestion boxes were also put in place outside the Mallacoota and Genoa post boxes.

We received many letters and emails with ideas for bushfire recovery and community resilience in general. These ideas have been incorporated in this Plan and can be loosely grouped under the following headings:

- Suggestions for how we can be better prepared for future bushfires.
- Identifying what was not in place during the bushfires which needed to be.
- Determining what was not 'fit for purpose' during the bushfires and suggesting needed improvements.
- Ideas for enhancing community cohesiveness, connections, and resilience.
- Ways of increasing economic and job security.
- Preserving, replacing/improving/preserving what we love.
- Innovative ideas for new projects and facilities.

Our pristine wilderness environment and the desire to keep it that way is uppermost in our community's values. This means striking a balance between maximising biodiversity and enhancing fire safety.

Community feedback indicates there is no desire for Mallacoota to significantly expand. We like living in a small country town. In any case, our capacity for growth is limited by water supply constraints and being in the middle of the Croajingolong National Park.

The danger, however, is the town might shrink unless we can entice young families to stay or move here. This is because our population is elderly – nearly half is over the age of 60 and around one seventh over the age of 75. There is strong possibility we could lose a significant portion of our population as people die or move closer to family, aged care, and other services. Not only would this result in the loss of precious friends and valuable resources, but this would also have adverse flow on effects for businesses, employment opportunities, volunteerism, and support services.

Genoa residents expressed a desire for infrastructure which will enhance township appearance, improve, and increase amenities and attract more economic activity. Based on the experience of being isolated during the bushfires, the need for emergency facilities and equipment was highlighted.

External Factors

Forewarned is forearmed. Our aim is to build robust and enduring solutions into our recovery planning and projects.

To be on the recovery ‘front foot’ we need to understand the broad political, economic, environmental, social, and technological (PEST) trends that will impact and shape our recovery strategies. To this end, a detailed PEST analysis is contained in [Appendix F](#).

Key findings are:

- Political support for our local bushfire recovery initiatives remains strong.
- Structural changes to economy post the bushfires and COVID-19 could be advantageous to Mallacoota and District.
- Our climate is changing resulting in a harsher fire-weather climate, less cool season rainfall and more extreme rainfall and sea-level events.
- The potential for insurance costs to become untenable or for homes to be uninsurable if we do not adapt our planning and building to account for future disasters.
- There are numerous ways we can ‘build back better’ to future proof our homes and infrastructure.
- COVID-19 has changed the way we work, play, and connect. There are likely to be long term mental health issues arising from the twin disasters of the bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions.
- Technological advances offer new opportunities for bushfire preparedness and combat and for broadening and diversifying our economy.

Community Capacity

In this section, we look inwards to our ability to undertake and absorb bushfire recovery activities and initiatives. Inextricably, our bushfire recovery is linked with COVID-19 conditions which have exacerbated our recovery efforts.

A **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats (SWOT) analysis is a useful tool to assist decision making, guide strategy development and identify potential risks. SWOT stands for The **SW** components are inward-looking, and the **OT** are externally focussed.

The following tables provide an elementary SWOT analysis of our community which focuses on our capacity to undertake bushfire and COVID-19 recovery initiatives.

MALLACOOTA AND DISTRICT SWOT	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>We put aside our differences and pull together in a crisis.</p> <p>Strong social capital and networks with over 65 clubs and organisations</p> <p>A love of place and our wilderness setting.</p> <p>Community voice through MADRA.</p> <p>Wide diversity of skills, education, and experiences – over one-quarter of us has a Certificate 111</p>	<p>An ageing population – as of 2016 nearly one-half was over 60 and one-seventh was over 75.</p> <p>Potentially, we could lose a considerable portion of our population if people in this demographic die or move closer to family and hospitals or into aged care. Not only would we lose precious friends and valuable knowledge, but there could also be significant flow-on effects for our economy and support services.</p>

MALLACOOTA AND DISTRICT SWOT	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>qualification or higher, nearly one-fifth has a university degree.</p> <p>We have a good mix of technicians, tradespeople, professionals, labourers, care workers, sales, and administrative workers. (We can fix it, build it, write about it, care for it, sell it and manage it!)</p> <p>We are used to being isolated and 'at the end of the line'.</p> <p>We are a DIY community, over 39% of us volunteer in some way.</p> <p>Infrastructure strong points: airport, emergency back-up battery and diesel generator, reliable water supply, community radio station.</p> <p>Existing lobby groups and partnerships, such as the Gippsland Regional Partnership.</p> <p>We now have NBN.</p> <p>Funding has been approved for the installation of a base station to provide access to Telstra 4G mobile coverage at Gipsy Point.</p>	<p>Our reliance on volunteerism could be unsustainable as our population ages.</p> <p>We are a vulnerable population. As of 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly one-third (32.3%) lives alone. Three-quarters (75%) survive on either lowest or medium low income. Just over one-fifth of our dwellings (22.3%) has no internet connection 5.6% need assistance with core activities. 4.5% have no motor vehicle <p>Some people in our population are in danger of slipping between the cracks because of a lack of means of connecting with others or because they will not seek help.</p> <p>123 homes were lost during the fires. Some people are still struggling with housing issues. The situation is exacerbated by the end of the COVID-19 rental moratorium as of the 31st of March 2021.</p> <p>A high rate of unemployment (10%) compared with the rest of Victoria (7%). Underemployment is potentially a problem with 50% of workers working part-time, including seasonal workers.</p> <p>Only one sealed road in and out of Mallacoota.</p> <p>Reliance on fossil fuels for energy.</p> <p>Ocean access issues with boat ramp silting and entrance closures.</p> <p>A poor understanding of cultural and heritage issues leading to the loss of at least one sacred object by a contractor.</p> <p>Poor mobile internet and black spots. An upgrade of the radio links across East Gippsland is required to fix the mobile internet problem.</p>

Figure 14: Mallacoota and District SWOT – Strengths and Weaknesses

MALLACOOTA AND DISTRICT SWOT	
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Space for new industries and enterprises in line with our economic, environmental, and social values (such as social enterprises, online businesses, cottage industries)</p>	<p>Structural changes to the economy could see entrenched unemployment.</p> <p>Changing climate conditions include a harsher fire-weather climate, rises to mean sea levels, less</p>

MALLACOOTA AND DISTRICT SWOT	
Opportunities	Threats
<p>A downturn in international travel may translate into more domestic tourism expenditure and opportunities.</p> <p>Potential for stimulus packages in a range of areas to create employment and encourage spending.</p> <p>Ongoing grants and funding opportunities across a range of areas.</p> <p>Working from home becoming a new norm.</p> <p>Technological advances will lead to new approaches to bushfire prevention and recovery.</p> <p>Technological advances in areas such as education and health.</p> <p>New opportunities for connections, learning and training.</p> <p>Sustainable energy opportunities.</p> <p>Community-led recovery in the spotlight and a vested interest in it succeeding.</p> <p>Rebuilding damaged or destroyed infrastructure to future proof and fireproof our assets.</p>	<p>rainfall and more extreme weather events resulting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • damage to our natural environment and biodiversity, • inundation of low-lying properties, and • prohibitive insurance premiums or homes which are not able to be insured. <p>Social inequalities could lead to mental health issues and social unrest among young people and socially disadvantaged people.</p> <p>The tyranny of distance including end of line connectivity and power issues.</p>

Figure 15: Mallacoota and District SWOT - Opportunities and Threats

Our Bushfire Recovery Strategies

Our analysis throws up a series of ‘signposts’, the areas in which we should be looking to develop our recovery strategies.

What is meant by ‘strategy’? A strategy is a framework for effective decision making. Our strategic framework is focused on achieving our vision of an inclusive, vibrant, strong, and safe community. Our recovery strategies guide and focus our efforts on what is most important in our recovery process.

Based on community input, the analysis of the external environment and our community capacity, this section looks at the broad strategies which underpin our bushfire recovery priorities. While these strategies have a primary focus on bushfire recovery, they are now also intrinsically linked to COVID-19.

Importantly, what might look like a need or an opportunity on paper might not be one.³⁷ In such cases, the next step is to identify *actual* gaps and opportunities. This will require looking for new or different evidence to substantiate the need and to inform decision making around projects and priorities.

³⁷ For example, not owning a motor vehicle might be a lifestyle choice and not a hardship.

MADRA's role as a 'community voice' is to work with community members to identify issues and develop solutions for consideration by the organisations responsible for service and infrastructure delivery. As part of this role, we have asked all three levels of government to work together to identify funding pathways for the projects outlined in this plan and/or to suggest other ways for realising our recovery strategies and vision.

The following table contains initial strategies for each of the bushfire recovery pillars.

Initial Strategies in Support of Mallacoota and District Recovery Projects
<p>Aboriginal Healing and Culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with traditional owners and responsible agencies to identify and protect aboriginal cultural heritage and to learn about our traditional owners and their culture.
<p>People and Wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek resolution of current housing issues including loss of rental subsidies and a shortfall in rental accommodation for owners and tenants of homes lost during the bushfires. • Identify and advocate for longer-term housing solutions to meet the transitional and emergency housing needs and during the rebuilding phase. • Social activities and venues which foster community connections. • Using our formal and informal networks to look out for vulnerable people. • Programs for building resilience across different groups: youth, elderly people, people living with a disability. • The right support at the right time including information and professional help. • Learning from our bushfire experience, review local emergency and relief plans, identify improvements to emergency infrastructure and ways to provide community members with information on how to be prepared in the event of natural disasters.
<p>Buildings and Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace/repair and upgrade our critical infrastructure so that it is 'fit for purpose' and is fire and future-proofed. • Replace/repair/upgrade and increase recreational facilities for the benefit of community members and visitors. • Explore opportunities for sustainable, independent energy. • Look at ways to protect our historical and cultural icons. • Revisit our town planning framework to build in climate adaptation and resilience.
<p>Business and Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with State and Federal Governments on improving our broader large scale economic infrastructure including roads, communications, and energy. • Work with our three levels of government to identify grant and funding opportunities through such programs as the Local Economic Recovery (LER) program. • Undertake strategic research projects. • Look for synergies and partnerships which will enhance our brand and strengthen our economy.

Initial Strategies in Support of Mallacoota and District Recovery Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, encourage, and support innovative regional initiatives which will benefit Mallacoota and District and the surrounding coastal and inland environments. <p>Working alongside MDBTA and other interest groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noting the financial impact of the bushfires and COVID-19 on our local economy during peak visitor season, look at ways to attract year-round business. Without displacing existing businesses, identify new business opportunities which are compatible across our social, environmental, and economic values. Identify the resources required to attract businesses that are needed in our community, such as more industrial land and better connectivity. In anticipation of structural changes to our economy, examine ways for creating opportunities in a new economy such as social enterprises and online businesses. Investigate pathways for obtaining training and education to enhance employment opportunities in the post bushfire/COVID-19 environment. Look at government stimulus programs and identify projects which might attract funding. Consider how the spare capacity in our workforce – due to un- or underemployment or lack of appropriate skills – could also benefit from stimulus projects.
<p>Environment and Biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to remediate bushfire damage to our flora and fauna. Examine ways to achieve a balance between bushfire risk reduction and protection of our natural environment. Examine ways to educate people on our unique natural values and why they must be protected and pathways for climate-resilient futures. Identify ways to protect our natural environment from the impacts of our changing climate.

Figure 16: Initial Strategies in Support of Mallacoota and District Recovery Projects

Chapter Five – Aboriginal Healing and Culture

This chapter is on hold pending consultation with Traditional Owners.

Consultation

Permissions

Cultural Heritage

A post-fire audit and a protection plan for remaining items if this is appropriate and culturally sensitive?

The following paragraphs have been copied from the 2007 *Mallacoota Urban Design Framework* ³⁸.

Mallacoota and District contains substantial Aboriginal heritage values, due to their location in coastal and/or riverine environments, which were preferred occupation areas for Aboriginal people. Comprehensive cultural heritage survey in and around these settlements is very limited, although a number of sites of value have been identified in many of the towns.

Given the sensitivity of these areas, the very limited previous cultural heritage assessments, the high likelihood of further Aboriginal sites and bushfire damage to existing sites, significant investigation prior to development is necessary.

Based on information by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) and drawn from the AAV register and other sources prior to the bushfires, we know of the following sites:

- Many known pre-contact Aboriginal heritage value sites
- 12 register of the National Estate listings:
 - Benedore River Geological Area
 - Old Coast Track, Mallacoota; Cape Howe Geological Area
 - Mallacoota; Croajingolong Area (revised),
 - Princes Highway, Mallacoota
 - 2 x Indigenous Places, Mallacoota
 - Lake Wau Wauka Geological Area, Mallacoota
 - Mallacoota Inlet National Park, Mallacoota Road
 - Mallacoota; RAAF Base, Betka Road, Mallacoota
 - RAAF Underground Operations Room, Betka Road, Mallacoota
 - Sandpatch Point Geological Area, Sand Patch Track, Mallacoota
 - Spotted Dog Gold Mine, Lake View Track, Mallacoota
 - Wingan Inlet Geological Area, Wingan Road, Mallacoota
- Six sites covered by the Heritage Overlay in the East Gippsland Planning Scheme:

³⁸https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/files/content/public/community/plans_and_projects/mallacoota_and_district/mallacootaudfreport_noplans.pdf

- HO227 RAAF Underground Operations Room (former), Aerodrome Access Road, Mallacoota
- HO245 Captain Stevenson's Point Area, south east of Mallacoota
- HO246 Mallacoota Inlet Midden Complex Mallacoota
- HO 313 Stand of rough-barked Apple Myrtle tree, Maurice Avenue, Mallacoota
- HO314 Stand of rough-barked Apple Myrtle tree, Allan Drive, Mallacoota
- HO336 Mallacoota Gum Trees, Develing's Gulch, Mallacoota.

Under Part 11A of the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, Mallacoota is associated with the Far East Gippsland Aboriginal Corporation. (Fact check)

There is no current Native Title claim in the area.

Chapter Six – People and Wellbeing

At its very heart, recovery is about people and ensuring those who lost their homes or suffered other significant stress, such as property damage and loss of income, have the supports they need to get back on their feet. This means looking out for those who may be 'slipping between the cracks' and advocating for community members whose cases may not fit neatly within assistance guidelines.

We are mindful that there are many who will not seek formal help but who may be struggling. This could include volunteers and those who kept our communities running during and in the aftermath of the fires. We encourage our community to look out for, and after, those people. The end of 2020 has not meant the end of trauma for some and, to this end, we continue to look for ways to build community connections and resilience. Support is available.

The beauty is we *do* look out for our own. Isolation means we are a Do It Yourself (DIY) community with over 65 clubs, interest groups and volunteer organisations which places us well for recovery. Continuing to foster healthy networks and social connections is key to building resilience and entrenches our sense of belonging and optimism for the future.

Importantly, we need to capture the lessons learned during and after the bushfires/COVID-19 and build on these. We need to feel assured that in the event of another disaster we are prepared.

Noting there are many crossovers in this chapter, ideas and suggestions are grouped under the following headings:

- Support and Advice
- Housing
- Aged Care
- Emergency Health Beds
- Community Connections
- Youth
- Emergency Management
- Commemorating the Bushfires
- The Arts, Music, and Creative Activities
- Our history

Support and Advice

As our community deals with the aftermath of the bushfires and in the COVID-19 space, we need to understand what support and advice is needed and if there is an absence or shortfall in service provision. In the short term, this means ensuring no one is 'slipping between the cracks' through lack of knowledge or confusion as to entitlement. Case workers for families and individuals have been engaged by BRV and we need to ensure there is sufficient coverage.

As part of strengthening community resilience, the MADRA Community Wellbeing Working Group looked at initiatives pertaining to health and health promotion, prevention and preparedness and support groups.

Other groups - external to MADRA - which are already working in this space include:

- The Recovery Management Team (RMT), which was set up in the aftermath of the fires and links agencies and interest groups.
- The Children and Young People's Working Group, which stemmed from concerns very soon after the fires around the impacts specific to children and young people following a disaster. Early on, this group identified the strong need for a youth worker. Many local and regional advocates are part of the group including representatives from Save the Children and the Uniting Church.
- The Sanctuary, a youth-led community organisation that was established in response to the fires and the need for young people to have a space to support each other as peers, invite mentors to learn alongside and host inclusive workshops and events for the benefit of the whole community. The Sanctuary is also associated with the Child and Young People's Working Group.

We need to understand the long-term impacts of bushfire and COVID-19 trauma including the potential for mental health and other health issues and social unrest. Post bushfire support mechanisms will likely need to be in place for the foreseeable future.

Our recovery has been delayed due to both the fires and COVID-19. Some people are only just now seeking help for the first time. Mental health workers are at capacity; however, future services may be at risk with no ongoing funding certainty.

We have had several wellbeing supports in place since the bushfires, however, some of this is finite. The need for ongoing support will continue for many years. For example, the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) is currently providing two psychologists. The RFDS 1.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) continues to the 30th of June 2022 and more resources are being sought by them.

The Mallacoota Medical Centre currently has mental health resources equivalent to 0.375 FTE which is mostly funded by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) but ongoing funding is needed.

Both the RFDS and the Community Health Infrastructure and Resilience Fund (CHIRF) have received funding for a Social and Youth Outreach Worker for Mallacoota and Cann River. The Youth worker/s will undertake caseloads together with group work support and events. The RFDS has also obtained funding for a social worker.

Additional resources for which a need has been identified include:

- Ongoing funding for full-time school social worker – 1 FTE (currently funded until December 2022 by St Vincent de Paul Society)
- Drug and alcohol counsellor (1 FTE) to cover Mallacoota and District and the Cann Valley.
- Vocational/TAFE outreach service with the capacity to have certificates/education running locally (including for youth).
- Full-time child and youth psychologist (1 FTE) working locally with families and community.³⁹
- Cultural support for Aboriginal communities inclusive of Cann Valley.

- A Community Connection person (1 FTE) to support groups and coordinate social activities and promote social connections between groups across Mallacoota and District and the Cann Valley.
- A communications support officer for those without internet and/or living in remote and isolated areas who need access to services and information.
- A family violence support person and access to safe housing. Our safe house burned during the fires.
- The potential need for ongoing case management for some people after the current contract expires.
- Social connection activities to support community recovery.

Other types of advice and support – such as financial planning, case support and rebuilding (planning and permits) are available.

Status:

- In addition to \$60k pledged by the Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation, CHIRF has now received funding of \$439,326 over two years for a youth recovery officer for Mallacoota and Cann River. This funding has come through BRV and Commonwealth Disaster Funding Arrangements.⁴⁰ Trindi Suratman and Lindsay Davis share this role which is managed out of the Mallacoota Medical Centre.
- The Community Connector role has been funded and Sabine Amos is filling this role.

Owners:

- RMT
- Children and Young People's Working Group
- Mallacoota Medical Centre
- Community Health, Infrastructure and Resilience Fund (CHIRF)

Housing

Australia has a significant and growing crisis in social and affordable housing.⁴¹ This has come about for several reasons including⁴²:

- Underinvestment by State and Federal Government
- Despite record low interest rates, house prices have been forced up as the demand for houses exceeds housing supplies.⁴³
- Negative gearing and other taxation arrangements.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Eden Magnet 30th August 2021.

⁴¹ <https://www.gtlaw.com.au/insights/social-affordable-housing-response-australias-growing-crisis>

⁴²

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Former_Committees/hsaf/report/c04

⁴³ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/may/11/australias-housing-crisis-its-one-of-the-most-unaffordable-in-the-world-so-how-is-the-coalition-going-to-fix-it>

⁴⁴ <https://povertyandtaxes.com/the-cause-of-australias-housing-crisis/>

- Increases in direct and indirect building costs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁵

Social housing is “secure and affordable rental housing for people on low incomes with housing needs, including public, community and aboriginal housing”. Affordable housing is housing “that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate-income households and priced so that those households are also able to meet other basic living costs”.⁴⁶

At a local level, the crisis is exacerbated by the loss of 123 homes during the bushfires and anecdotal evidence that rental providers are unwilling to enter long term property rentals following the end of the COVID-19 rental moratorium and 2021 renting law reforms.

The impact of the lack of housing on our social and economic position is significant. Firstly, long term residents are potentially forced to leave the district when rental agreements expire.

Secondly, essential workers (health workers, trades, teachers, police, cleaners etc) need accommodation to progress recovery priorities and for our ongoing service provision needs. Our geographical isolation means commuting is not an option.

The shortfall in housing will continue during the rebuilding phase as builders and tradespeople from other areas need accommodation. To travel and/or live far away from home, incentives might be required to attract building industry workers. This must be balanced with the needs of local tradespeople and accommodation providers to ensure no local business is displaced. In addition, housing will also be needed for the foreseeable future for providers of support services.

Innovative ways to make good the current housing shortfall are being explored. This might include a temporary accommodation park or the use of tiny homes.

There is a shortfall of emergency and transitional housing in our district. MDHSS has taken steps to rectify this shortfall by purchasing the Ballymena Holiday Units which will be renamed the Miva Cottages. We understand this will increase housing capacity by five self-contained villas. Three of the cottages will be used for independent living units and two will be available for respite care. MDHSS has also purchased an adjoining block of land where it intends to expand and build additional independent living units and respite accommodation.⁴⁷

MADRA’s concerns around people living in caravans at the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park being evicted on expiration of leases were resolved.⁴⁸

Housing Crisis – 2020-21

In October 2020 we wrote to BRV, EGSC and DFFH (then DHHS) outlining our concerns re a looming housing crisis due to a shortfall in rental properties resulting from the loss of 123 houses during the bushfires. At the time the situation was exacerbated by a shortfall in

⁴⁵ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10549941/amp/How-Australias-hardline-response-Covid-caused-collapse-building-giant-Probuild.html>

⁴⁶ <https://www.gtlaw.com.au/insights/social-affordable-housing-response-australias-growing-crisis>

⁴⁷ Mallacoota Mouth 15th October 2020

⁴⁸ EGSC letter dated 19 October 2020

rental properties while people who lost homes were rebuilding and during the GROCON clean-up.⁴⁹

As part of provisions to protect people during COVID-19 restrictions, a moratorium on rent increases and evictions was put in place. This moratorium expired on the 31st of March 2021. MADRA sought advice as to what provisions are in place for people who face eviction following the cessation of the rental moratorium. DFFH advised the first referral point for housing difficulties is MDHSS and that this applies to all people i.e. not just people who lost their homes as a result of the bushfires. DFFH also advised it was investigating the negotiation of head leases to preclude people from being evicted from investment properties and holiday homes.

By April 2021 – despite ongoing community pressure and suggestions of both short and long term housing solutions – there was no clear strategy for how the housing crisis could be resolved. The situation had now worsened as the COVID-19 moratorium had ended and families not directly impacted by the fires had now started to be impacted. This was due to a combination of waiting for planning and building approvals and leases ending. MADRA wrote to BRV⁵⁰ on 22nd April expressing disappointment and frustration at the apparent lack of action. At the same time, MADRA also sought assistance from philanthropic organisations including the Herald and Weekly Times and MINDAROO⁵¹.

Housing Crisis – 2021-22

The shortfall has continued and with the Covid moratorium on evictions now over, long term renters are being evicted and properties sold – forcing people out of the community. Temporary accommodation solutions (based on State Government regulation) primarily support homeowners – allowing homeowners to utilise caravans, tiny homes, emergency pods – on their land while they rebuild. That regulation (CI 52.07 of the Planning Scheme) does not apply to people who lost their rental home due to the fires, or the pressure on rental accommodation because of the aftereffects of the fires.

Also, the temporary change to the Planning Scheme expired 2 years after the fires making it difficult to rely on that element now. People already using temporary accommodation based on the Planning Scheme can remain in their temporary accommodation, but it is not available to new applicants. In NSW, the government extended a similar scheme for a further 2 years and its scheme also applies to renters.

MADRA has been lobbying BRV, EGSC, DFFH and the state minister, the Hon Richard Wynne (many meetings) to address the lack of housing for renters. We are approaching the issue with 2 basic objectives: allow renters to use temporary accommodation options for another 2 years and have social housing built to accommodate those who qualify. MADRA is aware that the lack of low-cost housing is a big issue right around the east coast, but in our district, the lack is not caused primarily by people relocating to regional areas due to Covid, but because we lost so many houses in the fires.

⁴⁹ DHHS/BRV letter dated 6th October 2020

⁵⁰ MADRA letter to BRV dated 22nd April 2021

⁵¹ MADRA letters dated 22nd April 2021.

MADRA has met with Homes Victoria (part of DFFH) shortly prior to the end of 2021 and Homes Vic is considering MADRA's call for building social housing. It will require Homes Vic to purchase land and fund housing. MADRA has asked that 5 3-bedroom homes and 5 townhouses be part of an immediate building strategy, with further homes to be built over 5 years. If Homes Vic take on the project, it will be a unique outcome – this kind of approach is not taken routinely by Homes Victoria. MADRA will continue to press the Minister and his Department for action. EGSC and BRV are supportive, but it is Homes Vic that has the resources and remit to build the housing.

In addition to the rental housing issues, MADRA unsuccessfully applied for funding from the East Gippsland Foundation (donated bushfire monies) to produce a housing plan for the district for the next 20 years – what is the population most likely to become, how many houses are needed and of what type/mix? MADRA will continue to pursue funding for appropriately qualified consultants to produce a plan this year.

Kids under Cover funded a teenage refuge home which was at 1 Betka Rd but was destroyed in the fires. MADRA members are aware of teenagers in the district who are forced out of home for genuine reasons and would like to see a refuge rebuilt. Again, MADRA is working with BRV, DFFH and MDHSS, who managed the property for Kids under Cover to have a similar property rebuilt.

Another area that is affecting rental housing is the change in policy over years where government agencies do not provide the extent of housing for employees they once did. MADRA is making enquiries with those agencies to see what efforts they can make to assist. One approach to the Police Commissioner has received a positive response and VicPol are considering the possibility of converting the old Mallacoota police station into accommodation, but no decision has yet been made.

Status:

- MDHSS has been awarded \$2.15m of Black Summer grant funding to accessible cottages for the frail affected by bushfires.
- In April 2022, Homes Victoria indicated funding will be made available to build ten homes for social housing.

Owners:

RMT

DFFH

Homes Victoria

MDHSS

BRV

Rebuilding

In some cases, the turnaround time for planning and building permits has taken longer than anticipated. This is for several reasons including:

- The need to provide proof of the loss of a home to various organisations such as banks and insurance companies.

- The EGSC Bushfire Rebuild Support Service was only recently established.
- Some rebuilds are more complex than others i.e. difficult building sites, adjoining properties.
- The need for Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) ratings to be finalised.
- The extensive loss of houses during the fires across East Gippsland, resulting in a backlog. This backlog has now been reduced.

We continue working with EGSC to resolve issues and to address cases that do not fall neatly within guidelines. This has resulted in changes to complex site assessments and benefited individuals through a reduction in their BAL ratings.

East Gippsland Water provided a one-year waiver of water rates for those who had lost their homes. On the 8th of February 2021, we sought an extension of the waiver for those intending to rebuild on their blocks who have been unable to do so for reasons beyond their control; for example, still awaiting planning and rebuilding permits for difficult sites. In April 2021 we received advice that EGW will reinstate water service charges and water consumption/volume from November 2020 but will continue to waive sewerage services charges until the 7th of June 2021. This is a further six-month extension for the sewerage service charges, providing the property is not sold or re-developed. While this is not the full waiver sought by MADRA, the extension is welcome.

There is a process for complex site rebuilds. People seeking to rebuild on a complex site need to go through their case worker to EGSC whereupon a complex site assessment is initiated including assessment of Bushfire Attack Levels (BAL) ratings. One possible outcome of this process is the site can be potentially purchased by the State at post bushfire values. The land then reverts to Crown Land. If this land is not maintained, the problem could extend to neighbouring properties resulting in higher BAL ratings.

We have been working with the relevant agencies and individuals re this issue and have been instrumental in changes to the process in terms of individual assessments and fuel management planning.

The current (Feb 22) status of re-building permits is, as advised by EGSC:

Location	Planning permit applications currently in progress	Planning permits issued for rebuilds	Builds completed
Mallacoota	2 lodged with EGSC planning 1 being finalised by RSS for lodgement	40	16
Gipsy Point	0	2	0
Genoa	0	2	0
Total	3	44	16

MADRA is aware that there remain many homeowners who have yet to rebuild. The reasons appear to be related to a continuing shortage of trades and the Covid related shortages of building materials and price hikes.

Status: Underway

Owners:

EGSC

BRV

Disaster Relief Australia

Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) was launched in 2016 with the goal of quickly responding to large scale disasters. The DRA Mission is 'to unite the skills and experience of military veterans with emergency services specialists to rapidly deploy disaster relief teams in Australia and around the world in the wake of natural disasters.

The first disaster relief operation was launched in April 2017 in response to the devastation wrought by Tropical Cyclone Debbie. This operation, dubbed Operation Dunlop, after WWII Surgeon Sir Ernest Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, saw DRA deployed to the hard-hit town of Proserpine in North Queensland. For over three weeks 62 volunteers worked tirelessly to help the greater Proserpine community recover from the disaster.

Operation Thorpe⁵² was centred on Mallacoota and conducted in two waves over the period 27 November. The purpose of the operation was to make safe and clean up residential and community properties for future reinstatement. The operation took place in recognition of our recovery being hindered by COVID preventative measures limiting disaster recovery activities.

When restrictions eased, DRA launched a short-term operation to fell dangerous trees, clear fences of vegetation and debris and perform general clean-up work. DRA's strike teams provided chainsaw operations, fence line repairs and debris removal and clean-up efforts in coordination with local and state authorities. This was achieved through:

- Deployment of plant comprising skid steer loader, tipper truck, chipper and clearing saws
- Tree works and vegetation management.⁵³

⁵² Operation Thorpe is named for Harry Thorpe a Brabuwoolong man of the Gunaikrnai nation. Harry was born at Lake Tyers Mission lived on a 15-acre farm owned by his parents. Harry and his father secured contracts to dig graves build fences and strip wattle bark for sale to local tanneries. Harry enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at Sale on the 12th of February 1916. Described as an inspiration to his men, Harry was awarded the Military Medal for his courage and leadership. He died in August 1918 after being shot in the stomach during an advance at Lihons Wood in France. Harry is buried in Heath military cemetery, Harbonnieres.

⁵³ <https://disasterreliefaus.org/field-ops/operation-thorpe/>



Figure 17: Disaster Relief Australia team during Operation Thorpe Mallacoota

Aged Care

Several local organisations have been working for many years to establish a residential aged care facility for our district including Mallacoota Inlet Aged Care (MIAC) and CHIRF. The name 'Miva' is an acronym for Mallacoota Inlet Village for the Aged.

Given nearly 50% of our residents are over the age of 60, aged care is integral to our resilience. We are one of the few communities in Victoria which does not have residential aged care.

In addition to ongoing care, an aged care facility will enable the protection and care of our elderly residents in disaster situations. A flow-on benefit will be employment and other economic benefits for our district.

Our local political representatives have encouraged us to pursue aged care and we are awaiting the guidelines for recently announced new funding streams to see what is possible.

Status: Underway

Owners:

MIAC

CHIRF

Emergency Health Beds

During the fires, many of our older people had to be evacuated to receive appropriate care. On return, they faced dealing with smoke-related disorders and bushfire-related stress. The

COVID-19 pandemic has made travel difficult and undesirable for our elderly population due to age-related risks and fear of being exposed.

In addition, there is a lack of care for those who have received hospital treatment but need interim care pending their return homes. The availability of respite/emergency/aged care beds and treatment would have numerous social, health and economic benefits for our community.

Mallacoota Wellbeing and Recovery Centre

CHIRF has applied for funding for a Mallacoota Wellbeing and Recovery Centre which will go some way towards meeting the need for short term care and is seen as a significant sequential step towards the establishment of an aged care facility.

The proposal is for a facility with six independent suites built to medical standards that can be used for the range of needs in the community and to meet the needs of suppliers of the services. The suite will be used for patients who cannot temporarily operate from home or cannot be transferred to hospital, patients returning from hospital who require short-term care recovery, respite care, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Included in the proposal is a gym and an equipment room and office facilities that can be used by specialists, allied health or students for study, young professionals, and tradespeople to use for distance learning.

Status: Funding applications submitted.

Owner:

CHIRF

Community Connections

One-third of our population lives alone and one-fifth does not have a connection to the internet. These are potentially vulnerable people who may be adversely affected by bushfire and COVID-19.

As part of the recovery process, we are looking at ways of ensuring our more vulnerable people feel supported and are not alone if this is not by choice. This involves building on existing formal networks – such as clubs – and our informal networks - such as friendship groups – as well as tapping into the many support opportunities being offered by government.

Social Opportunities

People heal in different ways. COVID-19 has meant we are unable to meet and have fun in ways that make us feel better and help us recover. As restrictions lift, social ‘business as usual’ is resuming. The ‘Coota Gathers’ event in December 2020 was organised by local volunteers and was a welcome first opportunity to meet, eat and listen to music in line with COVID-19 restrictions.

Community suggestions for social opportunities which have already been initiated include:

- Pop-up drive-in cinema on the old soccer ground near the Golf Club
- Supporting the desire for an off-lead dog beach

- Exploring grant opportunities for community social connections and providing letters of support for community grant applications; for example, the Yarn by the Sea initiative.
- A sunflower trail created to celebrate our children and connection as part of children's week. Sunflowers were planted at Genoa, Gipsy Point, Mallacoota, and the outer districts by community members of all ages.
- Family Fun Day to bring families together to celebrate resilience and to provide an opportunity for consultation and fun.

Other suggestions include:

- Regular dances and/or dance lessons.
- Creating recreational opportunities on our fire trails.
- Encourage membership of sports and social clubs.
- Concerts, shows, festivals and events, such as a busking showcase.

Status: Ongoing

Owners:

Several community groups are creating social opportunities and events including:

Coota Gathers

Red Cross

Reclink

The Sanctuary

[Reclink](#)

Reclink Australia has partnered with Vic Health to deliver sports and recreation programs for Mallacoota, Genoa, and Cann Valley districts. The aim of the program is to regain a sense of fun, increase social inclusion and improve physical and mental health of residents. Activities will cater for a variety of ages, abilities and interests.

Reclink commenced in our district in January 2021 with the employment of two locals – Callista Cooper and Cassandra McNamara. Callista and Cassandra have hit the ground running, seeking/bringing ideas for fun activities from/to our community. Tragically, our much-loved community member Vanessa Janss who joined the team as Community Connector has passed away. The role is now filled by Sabine Amos.

Status: Reclink funding has been extended beyond the initial period.

[Volunteering Opportunities](#)

Volunteering generates new networks and skills. Ideas for partnerships for learning and volunteering include:

- Mentoring opportunities
- Committee positions for community clubs.
- Tutoring courses in internet skills and telecentre activities
- Emergency services.

Volunteering creates social networks and builds community resilience. Encouraging our younger people to undertake volunteering roles will also allow for succession planning as our older volunteer workforce stands down. This is particularly important for our volunteer emergency services.

39.9% of our population is involved in volunteer work compared with 19% Australia-wide, however, 30% of volunteers are over the age of 60 and this level of effort may not be sustainable as our community ages.

A campaign to highlight volunteer opportunities, individual and community benefits might be useful to recruit **new** volunteers.

Status: Due to volunteer exhaustion, a volunteer campaign is not currently viable.

Tool Library

An example of a powerful volunteer initiative – literally and figuratively – is the Tool Library.

A temporary Tool Library was established after the fires through a significant donation by the Independent Hardware Group. Bunnings Bairnsdale also made a generous donation of battery-powered and other gardening tools.

The Tool Library was a container full of tools and equipment and was operated by local volunteers with borrowers getting free use of tool such as chainsaws, soil augers, pressure washers, drills, nail guns and an assortment of other tools. These tools were used to assist with the rebuild of destroyed homes and for the general benefit of all residents.

Initial volunteers included David Whittle, Stewart Laxton, Marion Lau, Lorraine Yap, Marty Goodison and Colin Dixon.

The Tool Library was a popular and well-supported community resource. Not only did the Tool Library provide practical assistance to community members, but it was also a place where people could meet and have a chat, swap tips, and learn.

In April 2021, the Independent Hardware Group indicated the Tool Library container would be relocated to Western Australia following Cyclone Seroja to assist residents there with their recovery.

The volunteers and community decided the Tool Library was such a valuable resource that an association should be formed to re-establish it. In July 2021, the Mallacoota & District Tool Library Inc (MADTL) was formed from a foundation membership drive and a committee was elected to make the Tool Library happen.

The committee comprises: David Whittle (President), Stewart Laxton (Vice President), Marty Goodison (Secretary), Ken Spackman (Treasurer) and Sandy Duthie (Asset Management).

In August 2021, EGSC committed to providing a site on public land for the Tool Library to be located temporarily until a permanent site could be found. Negotiations with EGSC continued through the second half of 2021 During that time, MADTL applied for a Black Summer Bushfire Recovery (BSBR) grant to fund the Tool Library project.

In February 2022 the Tool Library learned its BSBR grant application was successful with \$124,888 in funding over 2022-23 to:

- Deliver a tool library with premises (initially using a relocatable shipping container), tools and equipment for the use of residents, property owners and community groups to rebuild and maintain infrastructure damaged by the bushfires.
- Promote economic recovery and resilience by expending grant monies within the community and for the community unless resources cannot be obtained within the local community.
- Provide opportunities for affected individuals to connect with others and promote physical well-being through Tool Library activities.
- Support the community to achieve mitigation of bushfire risk and support adaptation to a changing climate on their properties.

Status:

- In March 2022, the MADTL committee and EGSC are in the process of signing an Occupancy Agreement to allow the Tool Library to operate from a temporary site at the rear of the former pre-school on Greer Street until March 2023 after which it is hoped a more permanent site can be found.
- The MADTL committee is working to attain a Building Permit so the project can commence during April 2023.

Owners:

MADTL

EGSC

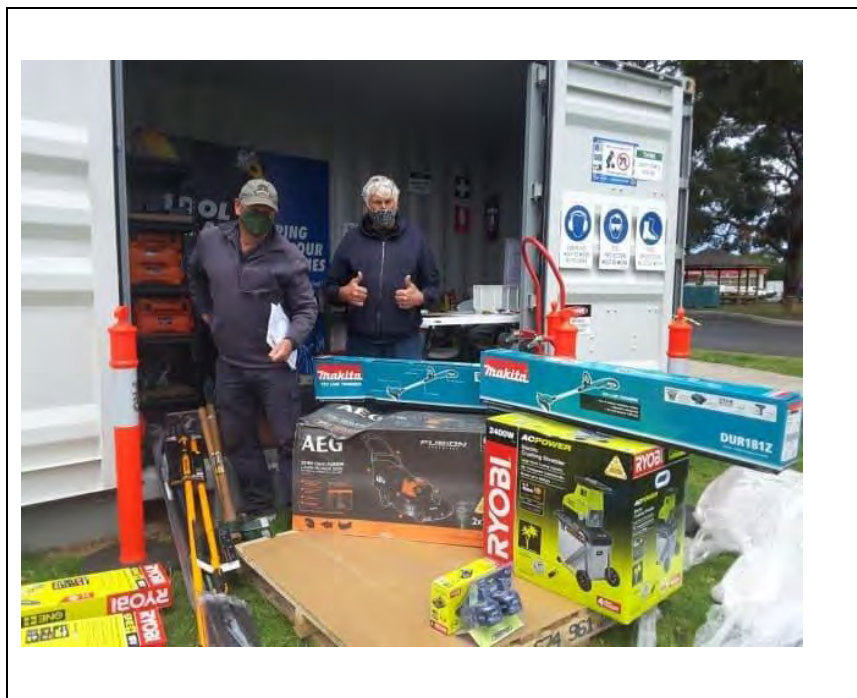


Figure 18: Volunteers David Whittle and Stewart Laxton at the original Tool Library site

Community Gymnasium

A suggestion has been made for a community-owned gymnasium which might be set up as a social enterprise. This would provide a permanently set up facility to those who currently run exercise programs as well as for the general population of locals and visitors. There is a possibility also that a swimming pool and a hydrotherapy pool may be part of this

development. There is also potential for this project to be explored in conjunction with the swimming pool project for which Surf Lifesaving Victoria is campaigning. See [Swimming and Hydrotherapy Pool](#) in Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure.

Status: Several groups are individually exploring gym possibilities including CHIRF and SLV.

[Mallacoota and District Broadcasting Association \(3MGB Wilderness Radio\)](#)

In addition to hosting many diverse voices in our district, 3MGB is important to our social wellbeing and for providing information on community activities and initiatives.

Status:

In 2022, the Mallacoota and District Broadcasting Association received a grant of \$50k towards Radio for Recovery – community capability and connectiveness in Far East Gippsland. The funding will equip the community with an Outside Broadcast (OB) and Mobile Recording Studio which will allow mobile communications and recording to extend beyond the ‘bricks and mortar’ studio setting and reach the wider district, enable partnerships with other broadcasters, and enable skills development for social and economic recovery. The set-up is also intended to play a vital role during emergency responses in providing both public address and broadcasting facilities at a safe place of refuge during disasters. In addition, the OB van will be made available to community and sporting groups throughout Far East Gippsland.

[Mallacoota and District Leadership Conversations](#)

A core group of individuals who are championing and/or leading a diverse range of initiatives to support positive impact for Mallacoota (social, economic, environmental), which are aligned with the opportunities highlighted in the Recovery Plan, have been regularly getting together since July 2021 to engage in conversations about ‘Collective Leadership’ and how its principles can support ‘Collective Impact’. This support has been provided through ‘The East Gippsland Resilience Project’ - a leadership capability initiative funded by Regional Development Victoria and delivered by the Gippsland Community Leadership Program in partnership with C4Impact.

There has been no intention to formalize a new group, rather it has been a forum to come together to engage with different ideas and tools and consider how they might suit the Mallacoota context. Recognizing it’s not a ‘business as usual’ environment, it’s been a great opportunity to support each, explore opportunities for alignment across initiatives and develop shared frameworks for making positive things happen in the place we all love.

Collective leadership may not provide all the answers – but there is research and literature that argues and provides guiding principles to better support achieving positive collective impact. Collective leadership lends itself to addressing problems or taking advantage of opportunities that are simply too big for one individual, one team, or one organization to tackle on their own.

Dr Nicola Watts has provided guidance and insight to the initial group, members of which include Mary O’Malley, Katie Symes, Meg Allan, Marcus Renwick-Lau, Liza Newby, Paris Brooke, and Dr Tricia Hiley. Others are welcome to take part in ongoing conversations.

The six core principles explored by the group are summarised in the table beneath.

Core Principles of Collective Leadership

Unity of purpose - Purpose is one of the deepest qualities we all choose to shape our lives around. Purpose is a source of energy and direction. Being able to simply state the deep 'why' behind our projects is very important. Let's always find a sense of purpose around what brings us together rather than what drives us apart.

Understanding the context and systems thinking - Before pursuing any shared purpose or jumping into any 'solution' mode understanding the context is key - but this is not necessarily as easy as it sounds. Systems Thinking is all about being aware of how we think and how the world works. Systems Thinking helps us:-

- See the parts as well as the whole
- Understand relationships – including actions and reactions
- Apply different perspectives and points of view
- Build connections and alignment
- Avoid unintended consequences and/or pursuing solutions that are not fit-for-purpose

Kindness, generosity of spirit and action – Kindness is an inherent strength in our community which needs to be celebrated and amplified. Generosity of spirit and kindness removes the blame games. It gives people freedom to have a go along with permission to make mistakes. It gives them the authority that comes with responsibility. It respects diversity of views and ideas. It gives people due credit and recognition for their ideas. It treats people with dignity and compassion when they're down. And so on.

Storytelling and Language - Contemporary author, Pip Williams (2020), tells us that "Words define us, they explain us, and, on occasion, they serve to control and isolate us". Stories appeal to our emotions and therefore often lead to action. Mallacoota is full of unique stories - past and present. What are the future stories we want to see emerge and how do we collectively write them? Communications and engagement are therefore key and it's not just about 'informing' and 'consulting'. It's about how we support authentic conversations that uncover our strengths along with our concerns, dreams, and aspirations - and then inspires and empowers people at all levels to support making good things happen.

Ways of working and organizing - Collective leadership is about non-hierarchical, collaborative, and connected ways of working. This means that everyone has a voice and responsibility shifts from being cantered on a few individuals in formal positions of authority or power to being cross-organizational and involving many different organizations. Collective leadership seeks to be empowering rather than controlling and requires considering different ways of working and organizing to support making things happen. It brings together diverse groups of people from community, government, business, research organizations and investors to make good things happen.

A shift from ego to eco (system) – Well known American author and academic Peter Senge says "I often say that leadership is deeply personal and inherently collective. That's a paradox effective leaders have to embrace". This is what we have embraced as our challenge – improving our own skills to connect and collaborate with others to make positive things happen for our community.

Figure 19: Core Principles of Collective Leadership

Youth

Our young people range from school students to young adults. They are valued members of our community and should have the opportunity to live, work and raise families here if they desire.

Many young people were adversely impacted by both the bushfires and COVID-19, missing out on rites of passage and important social connections.

The Sanctuary provides activities and mentoring for young people. This includes Initiatives, such as the Wilderness Coast Initiative which combines environmental rejuvenation activities with social events. The Sanctuary is working with the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) and other organisations to make sure the voices, aspirations, strengths and needs of children and young people are heard and responded to as part of recovery.

The Sanctuary provides a safe space for young people to chill out, to undertake activities and courses if they desire and to be with other young people, this is an incorporated association with youth leaders chairing the committee.

Rather than solutions determined by external agencies, the aim of the Sanctuary is to enable young people to determine what they need by way of an outlet and organised activities. This need is dynamic. Many of our young people hold down part-time jobs and have little spare capacity. The COVID pandemic has also severely constrained social interaction.

Activities that have taken place include:

- Digital media training
- Capturing stories
- Mentoring/training in environmental rehabilitation skills with ENVITE/Friends of Mallacoota (FOM)
- Arts Fest
- Youth Arts Exhibition at MA Space.

In addition, there is a need to build local capacity when external agencies eventually withdraw.

Other organisations working in the youth space include Uniting Gippsland, Save the Children, Anglicare, EGSC, Gippsland Lakes Complete Health (GLCH), GPHN, the P-12 College, Mallacoota Medical Centre Teen Clinic (Helen and Carla) and the RFDS. RecLink also offers activities that could be attractive to young people.

Youth support workers Trindi and Lindsay are hoping to work with these agencies, the Sanctuary and the school to identify youth needs, build capacity and act as a point of referral for parents and young people. Their aim is to build trust and to empower young people to see and make a better life for themselves through practical initiatives – such as a job opportunities noticeboard – and through allowing young people to articulate their needs using their voices.

Trindi and Lindsay also act as advocates for Mallacoota and Cann River youth, providing local context to visiting organisations and needs assessment. This will ensure agency accountability and streamline referrals. They work closely with professional RFDS Youth Worker Michelle whose responsibilities include case management and counselling. The RFDS is currently working on employing a child psychologist for children under the age of 12 – this has been identified as a need by both the Medical Centre and the school.

The Mallacoota P-12 College has a school social worker funded by St Vinnies. Tegan has taken the lead in on support for the P-12 College, working with the school community, Save the Children, and the Head Space 'Be You' Initiative. Funding to maintain the school social

worker position past the initial appointment has been identified as a priority. The school is currently advertising for a Trauma Recovery Practitioner for a twelve-month period. The position is currently vacant.

The Child and Young People's Working Group is supporting families, carers, and agencies to respond to continued need in the community for Early Years support; for example, Family Day Care/Childcare options with Uniting and facilitating a calendar of events for Early Years (0-5). Whilst technically outside the remit of Youth Workers (usually between 12-25 years), there is demand for support in the Early Years sector, this important community need necessitates our responsiveness. There is also a period of transition and adjustment required to utilising a youth work services, having been without one for many years. Networking and advocacy – both locally and regionally – have therefore been a priority in 2022

Connection with Uniting's Youth Employment and Training representative supports young people to pursue vocational Education and Training (VET) skills and opportunities for young people to close the gap in local opportunities and meet aspirations and needs. This is being informed by advice from TAFE and the Jobs and Skills Network.

Other ideas for supporting our young people include:

- A Sanctuary Youth Forum to revitalise youth engagement across a whole range of activities including sports clubs, bush care, and emergency services.

Status: Underway

Owners:

The Sanctuary

The Children and Young People's Working Group

RFDS

CHIRF

Youth Employment Opportunities

Many of our young people are forced to leave town to find employment, however, with the right supports we can gainfully employ local people and provide them with vocational and other training including apprenticeships. Other suggestions include:

- Improving employment opportunities for young people i.e. local Green Army corps.
- Encouraging EGSC and government agencies to create apprenticeship, training and work opportunities for our young people.
- Opportunities to work and train in the digital economy.
- Encouraging EGSC, Victorian Government agencies and local businesses to employ local youth for major infrastructure projects within Mallacoota and District.
- Promoting volunteer activities as opportunities for young people to add skills sets and training to their resumes.

Status: Encouraging EGSC and government agencies to create apprenticeship, training and work opportunities for our young people was one of the top priorities for People and

Wellbeing as voted by community in 2021. MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking advice and support on this issue.⁵⁴



Figure 20: SES and Lions Club BBQ - Family Fun Day March 2021



Figure 21: The De Geus Family Enjoying Family Fun Day March 2021

Emergency Management

Debriefing and learning from the bushfires and COVID-19 is critical to future preparedness.

As part of this process, the following actions have been taken:

- Collating community concerns and suggestions and presenting these to the relevant authorities seeking action and answers.
- Liaising with our elected representatives on ongoing issues of concern. For example, as with the COVID-19 plan for the busy summer tourist season.
- Promoting educational and safety-related information, such as the webinar series put together by the [Fuel Management working group](#).
- Liaising with our emergency services (CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria, and Victoria Police) re a joint approach to disaster debriefing and emergency preparedness in addition to discrete agency-specific information campaigns.

⁵⁴ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

- Attending the emergency preparedness meetings being run by EGSC to provide community input.

Information and Protocols

The following ideas have been put forward by community members for consideration as part of the emergency management process:

- Establish collaborative protocols and partnerships between regional and local emergency services Operations and Recovery phases of emergencies.
- Develop a mechanism for ensuring emergency response crews from outside Murrumbidgee and District are informed about the local community and its features by designated local emergency services personnel i.e. alternative evacuation routes for flood-prone and fire risk areas and existing local services that can be activated.
- Encourage EGSC to undertake community engagement through the combat agencies to improve the planning and understanding of what is in place for an emergency.
- Develop a Murrumbidgee and District handbook (hard and electronic copies) containing information about individual and agencies' responsibilities before, during and after emergencies as well as existing education programs on bushfire and flood safety for dissemination to residents, second homeowners and visitors.
- A readily available evacuation plan developed by government and community members that factors in key issues such as seasonal populations, evacuation routes, sheltering facilities, jurisdictional boundaries, messaging to communities and risks to safe evacuation.
- For disasters and emergencies, improve continuous communication, early warning, and advice of supports to Murrumbidgee and District:
 - Social gatherings/meetings/events continue to be promoted by community groups to enable people to meet each other and develop networks that can be used during emergencies (e.g. alternative accommodation during emergencies, check who needs help with evacuation, etc)
 - Identify front line combatants whose families and homes might be vulnerable.
 - Explore diverse communications techniques and methods to address different age groups.
 - Actively encourage community members to participate in community education programs provided by EGSC and emergency agencies.
 - Encourage community members to make use of the VicEmergency app.

Status:

The following four of the above initiatives were in the top five People and Wellbeing priorities voted on by community in 2021:

- Evacuation plan
- A mechanism to inform visiting emergency response crews are informed about the local community and its features
- Establish collaborative protocols and partnerships between regional and local emergency services for the Operations and Recovery phases of emergencies.
- For disasters and emergencies, improve continuous communication, early warning, and advice of supports to Murrumbidgee and District.

As these initiatives must be undertaken by pertinent government agencies, MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking action.⁵⁵

Emergency Infrastructure

Learning from the fires, we are working with the relevant agencies and local associations to improve our broader emergency infrastructure. These projects are outlined in [Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure](#) and include:

- Working with the Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee and the Genoa Hall Committee re improvements to our local halls to ensure they are ‘fit for purpose’ as relief centres.
- Expanded Emergency Services Shed
- Prepositioned emergency equipment and stores at Genoa.

Commemorating the Bushfires

COVID-19 restrictions precluded an on-ground commemoration of the bushfires one year on.

A survey launched on 21st October 2020 seeking community ideas for commemoration revealed many of our community wanted to reflect quietly in their own way.

Understanding this might be a traumatic time for many, additional supports – such as psychologists and the Red Cross - were available during the holiday season for both residents and visitors. The was co-ordinated by our local Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) Wellbeing Support Officer Mike Amos.

Our volunteer Media Group provided a series of informative articles for community members on how to manage media interest. A full-time media adviser to manage media requests for interviews and stories and for advice on messaging within and to our community was loaned to us by BRV and her support was much appreciated.

The Community Wellbeing Working Group also developed a well-received guide for community members with tips for dealing with potentially intrusive queries. This guide also listed established supports. A brochure was also made available for new and returning visitors with supports and services.

In lieu of an on-ground service, a gentle commemoration film was made by Kristin Rule and other talented locals. This was accompanied by a radio broadcast. The film records the gradual path to recovery of our community and our environment. A link to the film is available at madrecovery.com.

Australian Defence Force (ADF) Bushfire Memorial

Shortly after the fires, the ADF unveiled a memorial, a plaque mounted on a large piece of local wood salvaged from the fires. The plaque symbolised the close relationship forged between the ADF, volunteer services and community members during the fires.

⁵⁵ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

The unveiling of the plaque provided an opportunity for ADF personnel from Joint Task Force 646 and HMAS CHOULES and community members to reunite under less stressful circumstances.

Unfortunately, insect damage while the ADF bushfire memorial was in storage meant the plaque and associated service badges had to be removed to enable fumigation and the plaque and badges could not be located. The original plaque has now been found.

After community consultation by the ADF Memorial working group, a permanent home for the memorial has been found. The memorial is mounted on a slab of granite near the Mallacoota main wharf where so many people sought refuge during the fires.

A simple inscription acknowledges the contribution of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF), Emergency Services and all the volunteers who kept our community safe and enabled us to keep going during and after the bushfires. The ADF memorial will be supplemented by storyboards that provide amplifying information on these contributions. A working group has been formed to progress this project. A proposal is for the story boards to depict pictures of the missing badges and reflect the wording on the original plaque relating to the ADF and Emergency Services.



Figure 22: The ADF Memorial

Status: Underway. A MADRA working group has been formed to complete this project.

Owner: MADRA Working Group

[A Reflections Park](#)

A Reflections Park where we can remember and reflect on our bushfires experience and journey to recovery has been suggested by several people. In addition, a Reflections Park allows us to acknowledge those who assisted us during the fires and in our recovery. Locations mentioned include the Cenotaph Park and Bastion Point.

Status: Not started.

Owner: Project owner needed.

[The Arts, Music, and Creative Activities](#)

The arts and other creative activities play an important role in the recovery and rebuilding community spirit.

“Arts-led projects can be a powerful tool as part of the recovery process, when the essentials of food and shelter have been secured and communities are scrambling to try to reconnect, reflect on what has happened, and express what they have been through in ways that sometimes words cannot do alone. The arts can be effective in disaster recovery by:

- Providing an opportunity for reflection and commemoration.
- Building new communities.
- Reconnecting old communities.
- Reducing feelings of isolation.
- Helping people develop new and creative skills.
- Strengthening people’s connection to place; and
- Creating a shared sense of hope and optimism.”⁵⁶

The arts and music have already played a significant role in our recovery:

- Beach ukulele sessions - sponsored by CHIRF and led by Padma Newsome - were held to teach people how to play.
- The Mallacoota Arts Council recently received grant funding to build a roof over the Croajingolong Centre courtyard that will enable more classes and get-togethers to be conducted in a more appropriate space for those activities.
- The very moving Epicormic exhibition reflected on our experiences of the bushfires. Some of the artists had lost their homes.
- The healing singing group led by Eva Grunden, which was established shortly after the fires and still continues.
- The many beautiful face masks made and distributed by the Friendship sewing circle.
- The Coota Gathers event in December 2020 combined food and music so locals could get together and chill out.
- Yarn by the Sea, an opportunity for yarn crafters to meet, yarn and create in a relaxed atmosphere.
- The bushfire commemoration film that was produced by locals.
- The Music Recovery program initiated by Padma Newsome and Susannah Keebler in addition to their research and thinking on creative recovery.
- Jade Oakley conducted a bird making workshop. The birds were created from anodised wire and hand-dyed silk and contained coloured lights. Over one hundred birds were made by community.
- The 2021 Sounds Better Together event in January saw big name artists perform in Mallacoota. This was a great night which local people did not have to organise.

An observation about arts in the role of recovery is:

“Creative Initiatives are most successful when they are designed by the communities involved and when they respond to an issue, such as the need for young people to reconnect, or for the creation of a central memorial in which people can gather and share their stories. They should be part of the recovery process, rather than simply aiming to produce an artistic outcome or product.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ <http://nsfconsulting.com.au/arts-disaster-recovery/>

⁵⁷ <http://nsfconsulting.com.au/arts-disaster-recovery/>

Suggestions received for arts projects in the recovery context include:

- A film festival showcasing the work of local filmmakers and those who come here to learn about film making and editing.
- Writing workshops and storytelling.
- The return of the popular Café Culture series and other theatrical productions.
- Multimedia projects and teaching multimedia skills including text, images, audio, video, and animation skills.
- Dance workshops.
- A local sculpture exhibition.
- Photography classes and exhibitions of student and local photographers' works.

Status:

- Many arts, music and creative activities are already underway.
- A collaboration between Don Ashby and Yolande Oakley on a book that contains Don's poems on his bushfire experience and is illustrated by Yolande.
- CHIRF has received funding of \$10k for the Ashes to Music program from the East Gippsland Community Foundation.

Owner: Any new initiatives in this area will require project owners.

Music Victoria Regional Development Program

Thanks to the efforts of Katie Symes, Mallacoota has been selected as one of three communities in Victoria to take part in the Music Victoria Development Program. Details of this program are in the table beneath.

MUSIC VICTORIA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
<p>The project is a 12-month pilot program designed to address the needs of musicians, music professionals and music communities in three communities in regional Victoria.</p> <p>The aim of this initiative is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create a legacy by empowering locals with the skills and strategies they need to recover from the effects of Covid-19 and then to carry that increased capacity into the future,• connect Victoria through shared experiences and increasing the regional music economy,• seek to improve information sharing, networking, and skills development, and• create linkages between different sectors of the music industry including metropolitan/regional industry partnerships, local councils, venues, booking agents, community groups and performing arts institutions. <p>This program also provides employment on a two-day per week 12-month contract for a Regional Music Co-ordinator.</p>

Figure 23: Music Victoria Regional Development Program

Community-led Recovery and Resilience Through Music in East Gippsland

Community-led recovery and resilience through music in East Gippsland is an initiative that successfully achieved Black Summer Bushfire Recovery (BSBR) funding of \$456,480.

This project sees the establishment of Coota Gathers as a social enterprise to deliver two core programs: an annual homegrown Far East Music Festival and a mentoring and

livestream program – Grounded Locally, Connected Globally – in support of social and economic recovery and resilience through music for communities in Far East Gippsland.

Music Victoria is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that will administer the program and oversee the establishment of the new social enterprise Coota Gathers. The business model for Coota Gathers will ensure it is community-driven and self-sustaining and continue to delivery outcomes beyond 2024.

Project partners include:

- Songlines Music Aboriginal Corporation
- Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Committee
- RecLink Australia
- Harmonic Whale
- Tacqueria Costa Salvaje & the Trailer Park (Vanessa Janss Photography)
- Genoa Town Committee
- The Mallacoota Sanctuary Youth Group Incorporated
- The Trustee for the Mallamed Unit Trust (Mallacoota Medical Centre)
- Mallacoota and Genoa Broadcasting Association Inc. (3MGB Community Radio)

Status: Underway

Owners:

Music Victoria

Coota Gathers

Our History

The bushfires are now part of our history. In the aftermath of the fires, parts of our history were revealed including a third bunker and a cricket pitch near the airport.

There is a strong desire to value and learn from our history and to have a place to reflect on the devastating bushfires. To this effect, ideas include:

- Progressing the story boards to accompany the ADF memorial.
- An audit of cultural and historical icons to ensure these are preserved and protected.
- Contributing to the Bunker Museum bushfire collection.
- Revitalising the old Genoa School museum site.
- Capturing our stories on film and in writing and songs.

See [Heritage and Cultural Sites](#) in Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure in which the old Genoa School site, the Genoa Bridge and the WW11 Bunker Museum are listed.

Aboriginal culture and history will be addressed in [Chapter Five – Aboriginal Healing and Culture](#) when this is complete.

Status:

- MDHS has received funding for a Native Bush Walk around the Bunker museum and is collecting stories and images from the 2019-20 bushfires.
- The Genoa Town Committee is considering uses for the Genoa School Museum site.
- Kristin Rule has been recording stories of the bushfires and our recovery.

Owners:

MDHS

Genoa Town Committee

Chapter Seven – Buildings and Infrastructure

Shortfalls in our critical infrastructure and facilities were revealed during the bushfires and our priority is for these shortfalls to be rectified. In so far as is possible, future proofing⁵⁸ and fireproofing Mallacoota and District is crucial to our recovery.

The bushfires also destroyed many things which we loved and/or were of cultural and historical significance. We seek to have these iconic pieces of our collective identity restored or replaced in a sensitive way.

Improving and hardening our economic infrastructure – communications, energy, and access - is also a high priority. A flow-on benefit of renewing our essential infrastructure will be training and employment opportunities for locals.

Project plans must be within the broad Mallacoota and District town planning context to ensure consistency, interoperability, and economies of scale and to take into consideration future risks.

This chapter contains the ideas we received for repairing, replacing, and rethinking our buildings and infrastructure under the following headings:

- Emergency facilities
- Community and visitor facilities
- Heritage and cultural sites
- Communications
- Energy systems
- Access

Not all proposals have project owners. These projects will be difficult to pursue unless there is a local group willing to champion the project and an owner organisation with responsibility for project management, initial funding, and ongoing operational costs.⁵⁹

Where community groups and/or government agencies have commenced working on projects, the status of those projects is noted. Projects without a status have yet to commence or require community endorsement.

Town Planning

Mallacoota and District town planning is governed by several overlays and design frameworks that reflect the desire of our community for sustainable building design, materials, and planting in line with our coastal and wilderness setting⁶⁰. Comprehensive town planning last took place in 2007. Now is timely to review our planning settings considering bushfire ‘lessons

⁵⁸ Future proofing is the process of anticipating the future and developing methods of minimizing the effects of shocks and stresses of future events. Future proofing is also about the design of things to be valuable and low risk into the future.

⁵⁹ For example, the Mallacoota Halls and Recreational Reserves Committee is a volunteer committee of management which is championing the refurbishment of the Main Hall. The owner organisation is EGSC.

⁶⁰ 2007 Mallacoota Urban Design framework

learned’ and the impacts of climate change.⁶¹ EGSC has advised that a comprehensive review of town plans will take place across the whole shire commencing in 2023.

The documents which currently guide town planning are available in PDF form on the EGSC website⁶² :

- Urban design framework
- Vegetation Quality Plan
- Planning and Overlay controls
- Urban Design Analysis
- Strategy Plan
- Master Plan and Master Plan 3D

Also available on the EGSC website are the following plans and reports:

- Mallacoota Recreation Reserve Master Plan⁶³
- Mallacoota Foreshore Management Plan
- Mallacoota Sustainable Energy
- Mallacoota Ocean Access Boat Ramp at Bastion Point
- Mallacoota Sustainable Energy Feasibility Study – Synopsis Report.
- Gipsy Point Urban Design Framework
- Gipsy Point Vegetation Quality Plan
- Gipsy Point Zoning Plan
- Gipsy Point Urban Design Analysis
- Gipsy Point Strategy Plan
- Gipsy Point Master Plan.

The EGSC website also contains copies of the Mallacoota Connects documents which provide insight into planning decisions up until September 2017.

The Genoa Strategy Plan 2000-2012 (not on the EGSC website) outlines strategic actions focused on liveability, viability, and sustainability. The Plan contains 27 individual components under eleven headings:

- Petrol
- Provision of hot showers at the Wayside Stop
- Signages
- Around the town
- Walking trail and river loop
- Walking trail and town loop
- Walking trail – Alexanders Road Arm
- Genoa Peak extension
- Tourist attractions sign/map in wayside camp.

⁶¹<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2021-02-24/tree-change-dream-over-resilient-communities-rebuild/13163800>

⁶² https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Community/Plans_and_Projects/Mallacoota_and_District

⁶³ The Mallacoota Recreation Reserve Master Plan is currently being updated by the Mallacoota Halls and Recreations Reserves Committee of Management.

Projects identified in the town planning space are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Expand the Industrial Estate.

Make available additional commercial land to attract missing trades and families to Mallacoota and District. Several businesses have indicated the desire to be in Mallacoota.

Status: EGSC has engaged a consultant to assess the adequacy and increased availability of industrial land in and around Mallacoota. MADRA is seeking a copy of the report and recommendations.

Owner:

EGSC

Conduct a Comprehensive Independent Fire Safety Audit

Conduct a comprehensive independent fire safety audit (risk assessment) to identify and assess:

- Critical infrastructure resilience (sewerage treatment plant, emergency battery/generator, communications towers, airfield, P-12 college, Medical Centre, MDHSS etc).
- Areas of greater risk within the built environment, community infrastructure, industrial and commercial businesses.
- Location and proximity to forest interface.
- Hazardous areas of vegetation both within the town boundary and at its interface.
- Safety of road access.
- Beneficial resources such as water availability, community safer areas and shelters.
- Essential services – water, sewerage, power.
- Emergency service resources and capability.
- Community demographics and vulnerability.
- Communication and information resources – local.
- Internet and telecommunications services.
- Tourist/visitor evacuations.

Status: This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021.

Owner: MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking action.⁶⁴

Review and Update Mallacoota and District Planning Overlays and Frameworks

Commence a review and update of Mallacoota and District planning overlays and frameworks considering bushfire ‘lessons learned’. Components could include a land capability study, a local environmental plan, and a cultural heritage plan.

A land capability study would investigate:

⁶⁴ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

- Planned retreat of businesses and houses currently located in fire and flood-prone areas.
- Precinct planning for public spaces where people gather in emergency situations.
- Building codes to reflect increased intensity of natural hazards risk.

The purpose of a local environmental plan is to ensure future development plans take into consideration the area's environmental capacity to maintain its character and to reduce risks and impacts of local hazards. This is an opportunity to develop more climate-resilient and adaptive urban features.

The cultural heritage plan would list our cultural heritage icons and how to restore/protect/preserve them. This includes newly discovered pieces of our built history that were uncovered during the bushfires, including a cricket pitch near the airfield and a third WW11 bunker.

Status: This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021.

Owner: MADRA has written to EGSC seeking action.⁶⁵

Emergency Facilities

Refurbish the Mallacoota Main Hall

In non-emergency situations, the Main Hall is used as a sporting venue (basketball and badminton), for events and as a Cinema over Christmas.

During the bushfires and thereafter the Main Hall acted as a refuge, assembly and relief centre and venue for town briefings. The report of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster arrangements notes:

"Communities rely on evacuation and relief centres during natural disasters as safe places to avoid the effects of natural disasters. It is important, therefore, that these centres are selected and maintained appropriately to be able to accommodate those who seek short term shelter, sustenance, and support". ⁶⁶

The Main Hall is around 45 years old, and its shortfalls are manifest:

- No stand-alone power and water
- Access issues for people with a disability or have limited mobility
- No handicapped car parking
- No air conditioning
- No air washers or filtration
- Poor acoustics
- Limited showers and toilets not up to modern standards
- No WiFi or telephone facilities
- Poor internal and external lighting
- Poor insulation

⁶⁵ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

⁶⁶ p.264

- No public address system.



Figure 24: Mallacoota Main Hall

Status:

- The Mallacoota Halls and Recreational Reserves Committee is working with EGSC to progress refurbishment designs and priorities.
- \$5k to enable Initial concept plans to be developed.
- EGSC successfully applied for a Local Economic Recovery (LER) grant to upgrade the Main Hall with \$818k being allocated for the project. This is in addition to funding received by EGSC in 2020 for halls works across the region.
- Concept plans are being developed preparatory to community consultation.
- The East Gippsland Community Foundation has provided \$67,000 for the purchase of back-up generators for the Main Hall, the Mudbrick Pavilion, and the Community Clubrooms.

Owners:

EGSC

Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee

Genoa Hall

The Genoa Hall required upgrading to be fit for purpose as a relief centre. This included independent generator power and other enhancements.

Status:

- Funding of \$50k was received under the Community Facilities Funding program to upgrade the Genoa Hall.
- In 2022, the East Gippsland Community Foundation provided an additional \$25,164 to secure and sustain access to essential services at the Genoa Hall. This will be used to purchase a diesel generator and other items to complete the upgrade.

Owners:

Genoa Hall Committee

Emergency Services Facility

Our volunteer emergency services include the CFA, SES, Coast Guard (CG), Surf Life Saving Victoria (SLSV), Ambulance Victoria (AV) and the Red Cross. The CFA has its own purpose-built shed and is located next to the SES shed on Lees Road.

The SES has inadequate storage facilities, training rooms, offices, and change-room facilities. During the bushfires, the requirement for SES members to be on standby 24/7 saw visiting volunteers forced to sleep on mattresses in the shed.

Both the CG and SLSV do not have facilities of their own. The CG stores its vessels in a temporary location at the Abalone Co-operative yard where they are exposed to the elements. Surf lifesaving equipment is stored in shipping containers on the SES site.

Current arrangements severely hinder the ability of our emergency service organisations to operate and respond efficiently and safely. Consolidation and collocation of the emergency services would generate considerable economies of scale, enhance interoperability, and joint training opportunities and reduce the administrative impost on volunteers.

Status:

- In addition to funds put aside for this purpose by the various agencies, \$2m was allocated in the 2021-22 State budget for this project. BRV is working with the Department of Treasury and Finance to seek additional funding required to build the new facility, if needed.⁶⁷
- SLSV developed a funding application for the Black Summer grant program to cover the shortfall in funding for the combined Emergency Services Facility. The application was successful with \$2.57m allocated for the project. SLSV, SES and the CG will work with the Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority (ESIA) to progress this project.

Owners:

Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria (DJCS) - ESIA

SES Victoria

SLV Victoria

Coast Guard Victoria

Local agencies

Community Fire Shed and Emergency Fire Fighting Equipment at Genoa

Genoa Town Committee has received a very generous donation to help build a small Community Fire Shed that will house three water trailers. Basic private trailer setups with water-pod, pump and hose were used by a few locals in town during the fires to great effect especially for putting out spot fires, ember attack and mopping up hot spots after the main front had passed. The Committee opted for multiple water trailers over a fire tanker due to their manoeuvrability, ease of use, price tag, low ongoing maintenance, registration and insurance costs and there was also no need for specialist training. Anyone with a standard

⁶⁷ Email Richard Teychenne (BRV) to Jenny Lloyd (MADRA) dated 19 January 2022.

vehicle can tow and utilise one of these trailers as opposed to a truck. The shed will also have a water tank connected to it for catchment to be used for fire-fighting purposes.

The Community Fire Shed and trailers are a proactive way to secure our future preparedness for bushfires but are not intended to be a replacement for CFA assistance. They will be a stand-by community asset available to residents should the need arise again.
PH email to Kate and Tanya – awaiting response.

Status: Underway. A private donation will help fund this project.

Owner:

Genoa Town Committee

SES Equipment at Genoa

The SES identified the need for a cache of emergency stores and equipment to be pre-positioned at Genoa. A suitable site is currently being explored. The cache would be a lockable storage trailer containing items such as traffic management equipment, a 3kva generator, lighting, hessian bags for sandbags and other materials which could be required during fire and storm events, road accidents, and search and rescue operations. The availability of such items would considerably improve response times as SES volunteers who live in our outlying districts could be on scene 30 minutes before the Mallacoota crew. The SES will service and maintain items on a regular basis. The SES trailer will be housed in the Genoa Community Fire Shed.

Status: Underway. Mallacoota SES is working with regional SES Headquarters. The trailer has been approved by SES HQ and is expected to arrive in April 2022.

Owner:

SES

Emergency Fuel Storage

During the bushfires fuel deliveries were limited. Some diesel was initially supplied by the ESSO offshore support vessel Far Saracen and then by HMAS CHOULES. Diesel was limited to emergency vehicles. Unleaded petrol was eventually rationed down to \$10 per day for generator use only. Emergency fuel stocks in the lead up to bad fire seasons would alleviate some of the issues experienced during the bushfires. This could take the form of an additional fuel storage vessel for diesel fuel. Unleaded fuel is more problematic as it is inherently unstable and must be stored in an underground tank.

Ideas put up for consideration include community purchasing the Shell Petrol Station site to utilise the buildings for community purposes – such as a digital hub – while keeping and maintaining the fuel tanks. Another suggestion has been for an additional fuel facility at the airport.

Status: This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021.

Owner: Given the importance of fuel stocks if we are cut off in a future emergency, MADRA has written to EGSC and BRV seeking action.⁶⁸

Community and Visitor Facilities

Parks, Lake and Beach Infrastructure

During the fires, we lost a significant amount of our waterfront infrastructure including jetties, lookouts, boardwalks, and steps. Many of our walking trails were also damaged.

We have been working with Parks Victoria and EGSC to influence design and timing of replacement infrastructure with the aim of better access, amenity, and durability.

This includes replacing some of the damaged jetties around the top and bottom lakes with floating jetties or a combination of jetty and floating platform and allowing for future installation of wheelchair hoists where appropriate. Picnic sites around the lake are also being restored including damaged toilets.

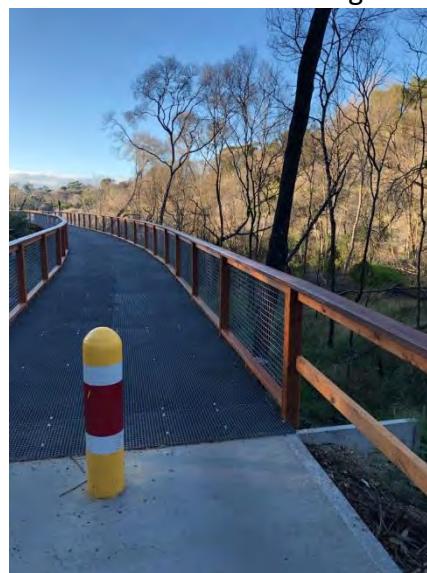


Figure 25: Replacement Boardwalk Coulls Inlet

Initiatives pertaining to beach infrastructure subject to community consultation are:

- Examining the possibility of a wheelchair-friendly ramp at Bastion Point.
- Replacing the damaged infrastructure at Betka Beach.

On 18 November 2020, the State government announced funding for projects that bring visitors back to Gippsland, including \$2.8m to improve access and visitor facilities at Mallacoota Inlet.⁶⁹ Planned upgrades include improving include facilities at Kingfisher Point and the wall access at Cape Horn. The Lakeview site will be upgraded to include storyboards and a walking track. The Allan Head jetty may also be extended. Parks Victoria is developing a program of works preparatory to community consultation.

Status:

- The walking tracks at Captains Creek Fire Trail, Charlies Creek, Campshot Point and Quambie Point have been reinstated.
- The Double Creek Arm walking track has been cleared.
- Captain's Creek and Sou West Arm jetties have been repaired.
- Genoa River Fire Trail and Gravelly Point were fitted with floating jetties to provide increased accessibility and functionality. Design features include
 - An Aluminium walkway with fibreglass reinforced plastic decking to connect the concrete abutment to the pontoon,

⁶⁸ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

⁶⁹ <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/backing-projects-bring-visitors-back-gippsland>

- A concrete top pontoon with foam body and sealed high-density polyethylene skin,
- Two FRP pylons with hermetically sealed high-density polyethylene (HDPE) caps,
- Pontoon width to accommodate simultaneous moorings of the design vessel on port and starboard sides, and
- Design vessel length of up to 40ft.

Owners:

Parks Victoria

EGSC

DELWP



Figure 26: Floating pontoon jetty at Genoa River. Photo: Parks Victoria

Accessible Boat and Canoe Facilities

Boating and canoeing are difficult for people with a disability or limited mobility.

Boat hoists assist people to get in and out of boats and can be used with wheelchairs. The installation of boat hoists at the town, Karbeethong and Gipsy Point wharves would open more opportunities for people with a disability to enjoy our waterways.

Canoeing for people with a disability is becoming very popular and to have a disability canoe launching ramp would benefit those who enjoy this sport.

Benefits of expanding our boating and canoeing infrastructure include:

- Improved access and inclusive use of our lakes for people with disabilities.
- Flow on economic benefits for Mallacoota and District.
- Enhanced visitor experience and facilities.

Potentially part of the \$2.8m funding allocated to Parks Victoria in 2020 (see [Parks, Lake and Beach Infrastructure](#)) could be utilised for boat hoists and other all-abilities infrastructure.

Status: Under investigation with Parks Victoria and EGSC

Owner:

The MADRA committee has been pursuing this initiative. Ultimate owners will be Parks Victoria and EGSC.

Skate Park

The Skate Park has not changed since being erected and is not in keeping with modern standards in terms of visual amenity and function. The Skate Park is popular with our youth and visitors. The community has been lobbying for over 10 years to have it changed. The Sanctuary Youth Group was established during the bushfires and is currently creating a proposal to develop the existing site. The Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee is also looking at landscaping for the site and the possible inclusion of a BMX track around the perimeter of the Skate Park.

Status:

- Funding of \$600k for a new Skate Park was made available from the Victorian Bushfire Recovery Appeal.
- A new design for the Skate Park was developed to meet budget constraints which did not take into consideration the cost of concrete removal and new concrete. The project has now gone out to tender.

Owners:

EGSC

Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee

Swimming and Hydrotherapy Pool

Life Saving Victoria (LSV) is campaigning for state and federal governments to fund regional aquatic centres with heated lap lane and hydrotherapy pools, gyms and other community facilities based on European models for such facilities in small communities. LSV will assist with economic costing and a business plan. Mallacoota has been selected as the first town in LSV's campaign for funding.

A swimming pool and a hydrotherapy pool would provide many benefits for our community and visitors:

- Therapeutic exercise benefits
- Children can learn to swim in a safe environment without having to travel to NSW for classes
- Opportunities for social events and connections
- An additional visitor/tourist attraction.

A preliminary working group from Mallacoota Surf Lifesaving Inc is ascertaining community support for LSV to lobby for our community and to have an open discussion about possible locations. A fact sheet and supplementary information appeared in the Mallacoota Mouth dated 12 November 2020.

Status: Underway

A MADRA working group is being convened to take up this project. MADRA to chase up with SLV/Mick D

Owner:

SLV

Community Owned Storage Facility for Events Equipment

There are many community events such as markets and festivals but no one storage facility for items such as marquees, signboards, eskies, and other essential event items. Rather than individual organisations paying for storage, a community events storage facility would reduce event costs and provide economies of scale. This facility could potentially be a council-owned facility with event organisers paying a small rent to cover costs.

Status: Not yet commenced

Owner: A project owner is needed.

Information Boards and Signage

Many of the information boards and signs along our walking trails and parks were destroyed during the fires. The opportunity exists to make replacement items colourful and informative using local artwork and technology. This could include the use of QR codes which can be scanned on mobile phones to provide links to:

- Historical photographs and information
- Videos of locals telling stories about what was on that site.
- Information on flora, fauna, and geography.

This has the potential to be a collaborative project between responsible agencies – such as EGSC, Parks Victoria and DEWLP – together with local artists and film makers.

Status: This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021. Replacement of damaged signage has commenced with approximately 25 per cent of new signage completed.

Owners:

EGSC

Parks Victoria

Genoa Tennis Courts

The Genoa Town committee is investigating the refurbishment of the Genoa tennis courts which have fallen into disrepair. The tennis courts were part of the social fabric of the Genoa district with the Nan Bridle Cup being a regular hard-fought competition. The roots of a nearby poplar have emerged beneath the surface of the courts and the court surfaces themselves are in poor condition. In addition to repairing root damage and resurfacing, a root barrier will be necessary.

Status:

Funding of \$184,617 for the Genoa Tennis Courts refurbishment has been made available through the LER grant program.

Owner:

Genoa Sports Club

Genoa Sports Club Rooms

The Genoa Sports Club rooms, together with the tennis courts, are the only access to sport in Genoa. These facilities are considered instrumental in the health and well-being of community members.

Status:

- The Genoa Sports Club is intending to apply for funding under the Local Economic Recovery Program.
- This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021.
- MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking help with this project.⁷⁰

Owner:

Genoa Sports Club

Mudbrick Pavilion

The Mallacoota Mudbrick Pavilion is at the heart of Mallacoota's entertainment, market, and event activities. The Pavilion is 35 years old having been built in the mid-eighties.



Figure 27: The Mallacoota Mudbrick Pavilion

⁷⁰ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

Originally built by the Soccer Club as a club house/change room, the Pavilion has morphed into a facility for performing arts. The building was not built for this purpose and its shortfalls preclude several visiting acts. The district has a vibrant arts community and an upgrade to the current building is long overdue. Minor maintenance has taken place over the years but more along the lines of a patch job until major renovations could occur.

Status:

- This project is incorporated in the Mallacoota Halls and Recreational Reserves Strategic Plan.
- This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021.
- Donated funds of \$100k have been pledged for kitchen refurbishment works. These funds were generously raised by a group of McDonalds franchisees.
- The East Gippsland Community Foundation has provided \$67,000 for the purchase of back-up generators for the Main Hall, the Mudbrick Pavilion, and the Community Clubrooms.
- Concept plans for the refurbishment of the remainder of the Mudbrick Pavilion have been developed.
- Funding of \$493,268 for the upgrade has been allocated from the Black Summer grant program.

Owners:

EGSC

Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee

Mallacoota Sports Clubs

Sport plays an important role in our remote community creating social connections and well-being. Sporting events and facilities also bring visitors to our district with economic flow-on effects.

Some of our sports clubs lost all their facilities during the fires and others suffered damage to their grounds:

- The Mallacoota Field and Game Club lost all its facilities during the fires including clubrooms, storage facilities, skeet range, specialised tower, clay bird throwers, automated voice release and power tools. The items were not covered by insurance and several funding applications have been unsuccessful. This club has a long history in Mallacoota and is unique in the range of internationally recognised shooting disciplines (Simulated Field/Sporting Clays, Down the Line, Skeet and Tower) offered to members and visitors alike. Before building funds can be sought, funding is needed for vegetation offsets.
- The Mallacoota Pony Club also lost all its facilities during the bushfires. The Club has received some donations and grant funding but faces a shortfall in funding to replace equipment and clubroom facilities.
- The Mallacoota Golf and Country Club Inc submitted an independent grant application for revegetation and remediation purposes. The Golf Club is a popular local hub and visitor attraction and has the potential to be a world-class golf course.

Status:

- We have provided letters of support for funding for these clubs as they seek to rebuild and will continue to advocate if post bushfire regulations and conditions impact rebuilding.
- The Mallacoota Pony Club has received grants from the Commonwealth Bank and \$296k from LER funding as well as donations.
- The Mallacoota Golf Club received \$1.89m in LER funding for revegetation works.
- MADRA is continuing to advocate for the Mallacoota Field and Game Club which needs funding for off sets. A Black Summer grant application has been submitted to fund offset requirements, however, the club has recently been advised that offsets will need to be repurchased every ten years.
- The Mallacoota Field and Game Club received a grant of \$280k from the Sporting Shooters Association for a replacement shed. Building has commenced.

Stuart Simmie (BRV) is pursuing on behalf of MADRA

Owners:

Local sporting clubs.

Kindergarten Site

A new kindergarten has been built at the P-12 College. There is a strong community connection to the kindergarten site in Greer Street and the memories it holds. Many community members went to kindergarten here and have children currently attending.

Several community members have expressed the desire for the existing site to remain in community hands as a community asset.

EGSC has advised the building is at the end of its life but the desire to retain the site for community use is acknowledged and respected. As the site is on crown land and part of the existing recreation reserve, it will continue in public use. Future community uses of the site will be determined by an assessment of need and the range of opportunities to meet those needs, including existing facilities.

As there are numerous undisturbed cultural artifacts surrounding the site, any new building will not be able to exceed the existing footprint.⁷¹

Status: MADRA has flagged this issue with EGSC indicating there are potential uses for the site.

Owner:

EGSC

Mountain Bike Trails

Biking is a popular pastime in Mallacoota and District. Our district offers many opportunities for mountain biking with the opportunity to construct new trails linking in with the High Country and South Coast Mountain bike circuit. The potential exists for a series of world-class mountain bike tracks stretching from the high country to the coast.

⁷¹ Stuart McConnell EGSC email dated 3rd June 2021

Benefits include:

- Exercise and social connection opportunities
- Employment opportunities in construction and upkeep
- An additional visitor and tourist attraction
- Economic boost for our economy
- Increased patronage to Genoa

A working group has done some preliminary investigation into a mountain bike development which includes 15km of single track in bushland reserve, mapping, and development of existing fire roads into cross country circuits and pump/skills tracks.

Status: Preliminary work was completed by a group of interested people prior to the bushfires.

Owner: An owner is needed to take this project forward.

Recreation Spaces and Parks

Community consultation has revealed the desire for more recreational park space within Mallacoota and District. Ideas include:

- More benches and better picnic facilities.
- Using fire breaks as walking and riding trails with picnic facilities.
- Seating and parking for mobility scooters and wheelchairs at scenic points.
- Shade sails over picnic tables.
- A Seniors' playground (outdoor exercise equipment designed for seniors).

Status: This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021. MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking assistance to take this project further.⁷²

Owners:

EGSC

Parks Victoria

Bike Track Mallacoota to Eden via Gipsy Point and Genoa

Within Victoria, cycling trips are a popular pastime. The Around the Bay in a Day and the Great Victorian Bike Ride are examples of formal cycling events which are well attended. A cycling track from Mallacoota to Eden via Gipsy Point and Genoa would offer an additional community and visitor attraction with minimal environmental impact and could be incorporated into proposed road upgrades. Over time, a cycling event could be added to the Mallacoota and District event calendar.

Status: This project has not yet commenced but could be considered as part of the Genoa/Mallacoota Road upgrade, noting funds are limited. Regional Roads Victoria is

⁷² MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking help with this project.

putting together a Community Reference Group to inform upgrades to the Genoa-Mallacoota Road.

Owner: A project owner is needed.

Maurice Ave Streetscape

Suggestions for improvements to Maurice Ave include better footpaths, seating, and improved access.

Status:

- EGSC has established Project Control and Reference Groups comprising EGSC and representatives from community groups to explore enhancements to Maurice Ave.
- Following community consultation, a final concept plan is being prepared.

Owner:

EGSC

Mallacoota Village Square

The 2007 Mallacoota Design Framework depicts pictures of the Maurice Ave shopping precinct reimagined as a Parisian like boulevard with wide footpaths and extensive awnings.

The idea has re-emerged with the addition of a village square on the site of the centre carpark. Traffic and parking will need to be reconfigured to realise this concept.

Status: This project has not commenced, however, the Maurice Ave streetscaping Project Control and Reference Groups could consider some aspects.

Owner: A project owner is needed.

Improvements to the Bastion Point Precinct

Suggestions for improvements to the Bastion Point precinct centre on safety including car parking, pedestrian walkways, and beach access.

Status:

- EGSC has established Project Control and Reference Groups comprising EGSC and representatives from community groups to explore enhancements to the Bastion Point area.
- This project is on hold as EGSC has advised no funding has been allocated.

Owner:

EGSC

Township Works Genoa

The Genoa Town Committee has identified street scaping and beautification works including kerb and channel, parking lighting, shade trees, garden beds and footpaths linking both sides of the river from the footbridge.

Status: Not yet commenced but MADRA has flagged with EGSC should additional streetscaping funds or other funding streams become available.

Owner:

Genoa Town Committee

Heritage and Cultural Sites

Old Genoa School Site

The Old Genoa School was a museum but was sadly destroyed during the fires. The Genoa Town Committee has received permission from the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA), Department of Education and Training (DET) ⁷³ to proceed with a Community Lease Agreement between Genoa Town Committee Inc. and the DET for that site.

The site will be home to the Community Fire Shed.

Other ideas for development of the site include:

- A BMX pump track – there is currently no other dedicated BMX pump track facility in our area and the aim is for the track to be both visually appealing and low maintenance.
- A multi-use building that could be used as an indoor/outdoor museum, art space, cultural centre, visitor information and/or shopfront to showcase local produce/arts/crafts.
- A big wall of street-style artwork (either along the side of the building, fences, or freestanding) with scenes of our beautiful historic bridge, the Genoa Falls, Genoa Peak or of our stunning twin rivers merging at Gipsy Point.
- A children's playground (an all-abilities, open-ended play space suiting the local environment)
- Community and/or bush tucker garden
- Picnic tables, shade, BBQ area, toilet block and upgraded parking.

Status: Underway

Owner:

Genoa Town Committee

Genoa Bridge

The historic Genoa Bridge was destroyed during fires. EGSC worked with the Genoa Town Committee on a replacement bridge that reflects the design of the bridge which was lost.

Status: Rebuilding of the bridge has commenced with completion expected by the end of the 2021-22 financial year.

Owner:

EGSC

⁷³ VSBA (DET) letter dated 19th August 2020



Figure 28: Rebuilding the Genoa Bridge

WW11 Bunker Museum

The WW11 Bunker Museum is a very popular tourist attraction that is run by Mallacoota and District Historical Society (MDHS) volunteers that during normal years hosts some 4000 visitors. In addition, it houses extensive archival material collected over the years from members of the local and broader community and provides a wealth of information on the history of Mallacoota and surrounding districts. As the museum expands its collections and archives, it is hoped to add value to the site with new or upgrades to the existing built environment' with improved BBQ facilities and the installation of a display/meeting room. A Bush Food walk is also envisaged to attract additional visitors. All these facilities would be available to the wider community

Power is an issue for the museum, currently, it relies on a generator and a small solar power unit. With more outbuildings, power needs will increase. Humidifiers are also desirable. Solar power with panels placed on the ground with battery storage would give the Bunker and any future display shed(s) necessary power. There is a possibility of power being connected underground to the nearest power pole.

Status:

- This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021.
- Funding of \$25k to re-establish the Native Bush Walk has been approved by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR).
- In January 2022, MDHS received \$67,633 from the East Gippsland Community Foundation for its power supply project.

Owner:

MDHS



Figure 29: Chris Parker, Jillian Wood-Ingram and Sue Nicolaou with the cheque presented to MDHS by the East Gippsland Community Foundation.

Communications

Our mobile and internet coverage is poor at the best of times and worse during emergency and peak visitor times. Our desire is for improved communication services, including mobile phone and internet coverage to cope with increased demand during peak holiday season and ensure early warning systems are communicated during emergencies.

NBN Network

Our NBN connection was put behind when NBN infrastructure burned during the bushfires.

We liaised with NBN Co to understand NBN progress and installation activities and to stress the importance of NBN to community (including alleviating the strain on mobile internet at peak tourism times).

This was a complex project requiring:

- Installation of 10 fibre nodes connected to the local electrical network
- Before the nbnTM network can be made operational, rebuilding the 63km transit link between Mallacoota and Cann River. The service is now underground.
- As part of the construction was in a 13km section of the Croajingolong National Park, approvals were required from different statutory bodies including Parks Victoria, Aboriginal Victoria and DEWLP.

Status: NBN is now available within the Mallacoota township with outer districts having access to Sky Muster communications satellites.

Improved Mobile Coverage

Telstra is participating in the Victorian Government – Digital Connectivity Service Program (ITP) and Commonwealth Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) and under the Victorian Government program, Telstra sought funding to upgrade our existing telecommunication

network to provide better mobile coverage for Mallacoota, Gipsy Point, and our outlying districts.

Telstra's bid for funding to improve radio links across East Gippsland was not successful. Upgraded radio links are key to fixing inadequate mobile internet speeds during peak visitor periods. Telstra stated there are other programs to support regional digital connectivity coming from both state and federal governments and Telstra will endeavour to address the projects that missed out through future connectivity programs. Significant progress has since been made.

An interim solution could be free WiFi access in the Mallacoota township and camp park which would reduce the load on mobile internet in peak visitor periods. This is being explored with Telstra.

Status:

- Letters of support sent to Telstra re improving mobile coverage in Mallacoota and District.
- A petition for better mobile coverage was circulated over the Christmas holiday period.
- In January 2021 MADRA wrote to the CEO Telstra asking him to comment on a proposed press release re poor levels of mobile internet coverage and seeking a plan and timeline for how this might be significantly improved.
- In April 2021 funding of \$693,882 was approved for the installation of a 4G base station to enable Telstra 4G mobile coverage at Gipsy Point.⁷⁴
- The possibility of free WiFi in the Mallacoota township and camp park is being explored with EGSC and BRV.
- In August 2021, the Victorian State Government announced the Victorian Government and Telstra are investing \$2.2m to improve 4G mobile capacity and resilience which will help businesses, residents, and visitors to Mallacoota.⁷⁵
- Improvements to the mobile tower to boost 4G are planned for completion in December 2022.

Owners:

Telstra

NBN

Commonwealth and State Governments

⁷⁴ Email dated 19 April 2021 from EGSC Mallacoota Place Manager forwarding Telstra email of the 16th of April 2021 advising outcomes of their submissions for Regional Connectivity program grants.

⁷⁵ Media release The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC 25th August 2021

Energy

This section addresses our community's current energy circumstances and needs.

Energy supply to remote, end-of-line communities like Mallacoota is fraught with challenges. For years Mallacoota and district have experienced power insecurity. We experienced frequent power disruption across all three GSL (guaranteed service level) measures of Supply Restoration (total time without power over a year), Low Reliability (how often our power went out), and Momentary Outages (how many times our power went out for a short duration), often receiving maximum rebates for our distribution network's failure to meet the service levels.

In 2011, a local volunteer group (the Mallacoota Sustainable Energy Group – MSEG) formed to address the increasingly frequent major and minor electricity outages in Mallacoota, as well as concern for the time it took for any outage to be fixed. They engaged with AusNet Services (our network provider) and the East Gippsland Shire and, in 2013, AusNet Services funded a feasibility study and EG Shire provided support services, working with the community to investigate options for Mallacoota that would provide a stable, reliable, sustainable, renewable energy supply for Mallacoota.

The study, completed in 2014, recommended that the community pursue the development of a commercially viable solar farm with a big battery, a backup diesel generator, and a grid-connected microgrid that would allow the town to be 'islanded' during outages. Changing circumstances beyond our control meant that the whole project never got the support to make it happen. Though the suggested 'grand plan' was thwarted, over the years MSEG stayed in regular contact with AusNet Services.

Mallacoota Area Grid Storage

In September 2018, AusNet organised a community meeting in Mallacoota to announce their intent to install a one-megawatt battery with a backup diesel generator in Mallacoota, at a site near the water treatment plant. Its intent was to give us supply while they located and fixed outages on our line. (see <https://www.ausnetservices.com.au/en/About/News-Room/News-Room-2018/AusNet-Services-to-Install-Gippslands-First-Big-Battery-at-Mallacoota> for information about the Mallacoota Area Grid Storage (MAGS) project.) The original project completion date was September 2019. As the first of its kind in Australia, it was always going to be a complex project. The inevitable delays meant the bushfires of 2019/2020, where most of the town was left without power for a protracted time, occurred before project completion and, whilst still in the shock of that, COVID-19 lockdowns and supply system disruptions meant further delays. Finally, on May 28, 2021, the MAGS was commissioned, just in time for AusNet staff to rush back down the line before another lockdown kicked in that night. Since then, though the 'bleeding edge' aspect of this installation means there are still a few teething problems, our community has been getting used to improved energy security, with numerous times when the grid is out and the battery has prevented us from losing power.

The system polls the grid and establishes the microgrid capability when it detects a particular anomaly or set of circumstances. Mallacoota is disconnected from the grid and runs as an electrical 'island' until main grid power is restored. This is providing a more reliable power supply for Mallacoota and can provide the basis for future sustainable and renewable upgrades.

When the system detects that the network supply has been restored and is stable, the system will transition the Mallacoota-island back onto the network supply.

In good news for Mallacoota, customer solar will continue to operate as normal during grid outages. In a circumstance where our rooftop solar is creating more power than we are using as a town, and the battery is fully charged, there is nowhere for the power to go. This may make the 'island' unstable. At such times our rooftop solar may be temporarily switched off but we will still be connected to the island's power.

Those members of our community upstream of the battery system (i.e. outlying districts), will not directly benefit from the battery and generator system, however, AusNet has committed to looking at those communities as part of its broader scan of opportunities across our network for stand-alone power systems and other resilience measures.⁷⁶

ACTION REQUIRED: An essential current and future action for MSEG with respect to this project is getting AusNet to understand that letting us know we are on the battery is actually GOOD news. And letting us know why we have had an outage is also of interest to the community. Work continues for us here.

The Gippsland Community Power Hub

In 2021 MSEG, still a 100% volunteer group, had the opportunity to collaborate with the Energy Innovation Cooperative (out of Phillip Island in far west Gippsland) and the Gippsland Climate Change Network (out of the Latrobe Valley) to partner in an application to Sustainability Victoria's plan for establishing Community Power Hubs around the state. In late June we were informed we were successful in our application to establish the Gippsland Community Power Hub for all 6 local government areas (LGAs) across Gippsland.

As a partner organisation in the GCPH, in the last 10 months, despite COVID-19 challenges and delays, we have established the Hub, the governance group, hired staff, completed more than 8 funded community energy projects, engaged with small communities across the breadth of Gippsland, assisted with the creation of several new community energy groups and created a lengthy list of 'projects in the works'. We are currently unsure about future funding but have created the basis of a support network that we believe will continue into the future.

ACTION: One of the funded projects was a 22kW community solar system here in Mallacoota. It's official launch is coming up in 10 days of writing this – on 4 June 2022. Despite COVID-related delays, this installation is now providing a good proportion of East Gippsland Water's power needs (behind the meter) at the community's Water Treatment Plant. We organised a leasing arrangement with EG Water and receive payments which will help us fund future works. The action here is to have a successful launch and enjoy the potential this first project begins to build.

⁷⁶ AusNet email to MSEG dated 3rd November 2020

The Bigger Picture

Efforts toward a 'Zero Net Energy'⁷⁷ future with a base of stable, reliable, sustainable, renewable energy for Mallacoota and district will, beyond the obvious benefits to us having power without frequent outages, bring numerous other environmental, economic, and social benefits, including:

- Reduction in greenhouse gases to reduce the impact of climate change that will, in turn, help mitigate the potential and severity of bushfires
- Security of supply for businesses and households will alter the town's expectations of outages and the need for businesses to have their own diesel generators.
- Standalone power systems for outlying areas will improve reliability for the whole community
- Employment opportunities will emerge as the transition grows and creates local jobs in areas like system installation, maintenance, and management
- The growth of a revolving renewable energy fund to be put toward future projects

Opportunities for SAPS to enhance network resilience

In mid-2020, an MSEG member was recommended by AusNet Services to be an invited member of the Reference Group for a research project undertaken by Energy Networks Australia looking into ways of 'enhancing network resilience', specifically for remote towns at the end of long feeder lines, such as Mallacoota. (See

<https://arena.gov.au/assets/2020/10/opportunities-for-saps-to-enhance-network-resilience.pdf> for the project report.)

Mallacoota Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Project

In June 2021, Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, announced funding support from DELWP and AusNet Services for increased energy resilience for three fire-affected towns of Mallacoota, Corryong and Omeo. MSEG became involved in this project and currently sits on the project's Control Group. Its role has influenced the alteration of the scope of this project to address local issues more adequately. Specifically, that increasing battery size would not increase our resilience if there was a break within the microgrid. The focus shifted to locating buildings of significant importance to the community on which to establish local microgrids. The project hired a local person to do Mallacoota's community engagement work which they found was very effective. This project is ongoing.

ACTION: Expressions of Interest have been lodged and work is continuing in AusNet and DELWP. MSEG will become involved again when the project moves to the next stage and will stay involved until the project end.

⁷⁷ Zero Net Energy is a concept defined by the use of energy conservation, energy efficiency, and on-site renewable generation to account for 100% of a building's or community's energy usage. This concept can also be applied to neighbourhoods, states, or a country as a whole.

Community Solar Project 2

MSEG has received funding from the Mallocoota Community Bank for a solar project of similar size to that being launched on 4 June at the Water Treatment Plant. Now that the first project has been commissioned, work on the second is going full steam ahead. Again, we wish it to be a 'behind the meter' system where MSEG and a client work together to create a win-win-win situation for all parties and the environment.

Next Steps and Future Funding Needs

- Investigate feasibility of reuse of small wind turbine
- Development of immediate (short term), medium (2-year horizon), and long term (5 years plus) sustainable energy solutions toward a Zero-Net Energy future
- Maintaining ongoing connections with community power organisations
- Pursuing opportunities for stand-alone power systems for our outlying districts
- Investigating V2g (electric) Vehicle battery to grid in the longer term
- Investigating financial support for MSEG's activities

The Mallocoota Sustainable Energy Group's Strategic Principles

MSEG strategies for sustainable energy have been evolving in line with the Strategic Principles outlined below.

Strategic principles for the Mallocoota Sustainable Energy Group are:

- **Stable, reliable energy** – having a reliable, resilient electricity supply
- **Sustainable, renewable energy** – working toward Mallocoota's energy use being 100% renewable (where the sum total of our energy used is less than the total of renewable energy generated in Mallocoota)
- **Community energy** – this is where everyday people develop, deliver and benefit from an energy project.
- **Empowering energy consumers through data** – increasing energy literacy across our community
- **Energy justice** – attending to those 'locked out' of the current renewable energy systems in town (eg. tenants, heavily-shaded properties, low-income households)
- **Social enterprise based** – is where the "business" (MSEG in this case) will trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide people access to employment and training, or help the environment (source: Business Victoria).

For further information on Mallocoota's sustainable energy projects, please contact MSEG at mallacootasustainableenergy@gmail.com.

Access and Safety

Roads

Road closures during emergency times can have a significant impact on our health and wellbeing. During the fires logistic support and evacuation of people by sea and air was possible. Notwithstanding, extreme weather conditions – such as dense smoke and heavy seas – can mean these fall-back options are not available.

Additionally, our economy has a heavy focus on tourism. A priority is ensuring visitors feel safe to come back to our district during the peak summer tourist season.

Within our townships, through roads must remain open during emergencies. During fire and flood situations, people may become stranded and emergency vehicles may not be able to get to those in need. Roadworks might include raising low lying roads, regular grading or tarring of dirt roads, repairing damage (holes and unstable shoulders) and keeping roadside verges clear of dangerous trees.

There is only one sealed road into Mallacoota. Just before the bushfires hit, locals were evacuating as tourists were entering town. The tourists were trapped when the road was closed and forced to evacuate by air and sea, leaving their vehicles, caravans etc behind. After the fires, the Princes Highway west of Genoa was closed for a significant period. Trips east to Eden were only possible under SES escort.

Several low-lying roads in Mallacoota are subject to inundation during rain events. Several houses were cut off during a recent flood which saw Lakeside Drive inundated. There is a strong need for all-weather access to ensure community safety on a day-to-day basis and during emergencies.

The access to the SES shed is via Lees Road. Lees Road is a narrow dirt road offering poor access. Turning large emergency vehicles and vehicles with trailers is extremely difficult. The situation is made worse when operations are taking place and the number of emergency vehicles increases as there is no off-road parking.

Key roads for which works are needed for 24/7 accessibility include:

- The Princes Highway west and east of Genoa - major arterial road.
- The Genoa-Mallacoota Road – the only tarred road in and out of Mallacoota
- Lakeside Drive – in heavy rain events when the mouth is closed, this road is subject to flooding cutting off homes between Mirrabooka Road and Angophora Drive.
- Lees Road – this road provides access to the SES Shed and an alternative driveway to the CFA shed, the road is narrow and untarred. When additional emergency vehicles are in Mallacoota, access and parking are problematic.

Status:

- Funding of \$12.7m has been received for the Genoa-Mallacoota Road with the promise of an additional \$2m. \$2.7m was spent in 2020 with \$10m remaining.
- Repairs to the Genoa-Mallacoota Road are underway. The Department of Transport has established a Community Reference Group to work with the Regional Roads Victoria project team. Ideas will be shortlisted in mid-2022. From mid-2022 to mid-2023, technical studies will be undertaken including concept designs, environmental

and cultural heritage investigations, and economic evaluations. Construction is expected to commence from mid to late 2023.⁷⁸

- Obtaining funding to maintain, repair and upgrade other roads was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021. MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking action.⁷⁹

Owner:

VicRoads

Footpaths

The development and implementation of a footpath plan for Mallacoota and District is highly desirable. There is considerable scope for improved connectivity and access within our district including better access for wheelchair and motorised scooters, pedestrians, and cycles.

Many roads in our district do not have footpaths including through roads such as Mirrabooka Road and Karbeethong Road and Avenue. This is cause for concern for safety and mobility reasons. A sealed concrete bike and pedestrian-friendly path linking the free campground, township and old school site at Genoa would improve both safety and amenity.

In addition, some existing footpaths are in poor repair. This is dangerous for both pedestrians and drivers and an impediment for those with mobility issues.

Status:

- This project was in the top ten priorities for Buildings and Infrastructure as voted by community in 2021. MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking action.⁸⁰
- Stage One of work on the Mirrabooka Road footpath between Raheen Drive and the Lakeside Drive intersections commenced on the 7th of March 2022. The new path will be two metres wide and starts at the Lakeside Drive intersection and runs 450 metres to the corner near Raheen Drive. A pedestrian island will allow people to cross one lane of Lakeside Drive and wait or rest before crossing the other lane, this will feature advisory signs and line marking. Drainage infrastructure at the intersection of Mirrabooka Road and Lakeside Drive will also be improved. Stage Two will commence in June 2022 and include a guard rail along an 80-metre section of the road shoulder.

Owner:

EGSC

⁷⁸ <https://engage.vic.gov.au/mallacoota-road-upgrades>

⁷⁹ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

⁸⁰ MADRAmy energy letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

Kerbs and Gutters

The development and implementation of a kerb and guttering plan for Mallacoota and District is also highly desirable. Many roads in our townships do not have kerbs and gutters or existing kerbs and gutters are in poor condition. This is not just an aesthetic issue.

During weather events, problems are caused due to debris and blockages. Roads are made impassable or unsafe.

Repairing and maintaining roads, gutters and kerbs offers local employment opportunities as does keeping roadside verges clear of flammable vegetation.

Status: Not commenced.

Owner:

EGSC is the responsible authority.

Flood Depth Indicators

Road signage is inadequate for roads in low lying areas subject to inundation. Flood depth indicators are needed.

Status: Not commenced

Owner:

EGSC is the responsible authority.

Bastion Point Boat Ramp

During the bushfires, the Bastion Point boat ramp was used by Naval and other vessels to evacuate locals and visitors. With the only sealed road into Mallacoota closed and air evacuations subject to smoke conditions, evacuation by sea was sometimes the only available option. The approach was so shallow some vessels were unable to come alongside. One vessel grounded and had to be towed off to seaward. As many supplies came by sea during the fires, including diesel fuel, access is critical.

In addition to its economic importance, the boat ramp needs to be fit for purpose for emergency situations including evacuations and delivery of essential items, such as fuel and food. The solution must also consider environmental considerations, such as habitat and disposal of dredged materials.

Status: The area is periodically dredged.

Owner: EGSC

Chapter Eight – Business and Economy

Our Vision and Beyond

A strong economy is important for realising our vision for a resilient, safe, and vibrant community. We have many unique attributes across a range of areas – food, natural environment, the arts, music, film, digital media, and other creative endeavours – and an integrated and collaborative approach will see us maximise these assets.

Community Partners

Both the Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association (MDBTA) and MADRA are working collaboratively on economic recovery for our district. This ranges from making sure our existing businesses have the help they need to recover from disaster to identifying and embracing opportunities arising from structural changes to the economy post COVID-19.

Another community partner in our economic recovery is the Mallacoota Community Enterprises Limited (MCEL) which is the community-owned company that runs the Mallacoota Community Bank®. MCEL promotes Mallacoota's recovery by working with MADRA, MDBATA and other government and non-government agencies to further the economic interests of community, business, and individuals wherever possible, committing to a buy local/bank local marketing program/philosophy and providing banking products and services to support local recovery initiatives.

MCEL's community-led philosophy ensures that profits from the operation of the Mallacoota Community Bank, together with the economic benefit of its local operation are retained within the Mallacoota community it serves.

Economic Values

Our economic recovery is grounded in our values; in particular, our love of our diverse wilderness landscape and desire for it to remain pristine. Guiding values pertaining to the economy as voiced in [Chapter Two](#) include:

- Turning around the local economy and making good economic losses
- A desire for greater year-round economic diversity
- Balancing tourism with the wishes of permanent residents.
- A desire for our population to remain about the same size.

We look at our economic recovery from several interlinking perspectives:

- Ongoing support for our business and tourism enterprises (MDBATA)
- Broader economic outlook and trends
- Strategic research studies
- Social enterprises
- Our demography
- Critical economic infrastructure

MDBTA Initiatives

The following is an excerpt from the 2019-20 MDBTA Annual Report.

MDBTA has been building its membership since the bushfires, increasing from 14 businesses to over 51. As part of supporting and rebuilding the local economy, MDBTA has been nurturing close relationships with the East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC), Regional Development Victoria (RDV), East Gippsland Marketing Inc (EGMI) and Destination Gippsland.

Projects being pursued by MDBTA include:

- Expansion of the industrial estate
- Encouraging businesses to relocate in/to Mallacoota
- Creation of a mountain bike trail
- Major repair and alignment of Genoa Road
- Support for events outside our busy tourism months
- Disabled access to one or two of the Parks Victoria jetty sites
- Ecotourism initiatives
- More footpaths.

MDBTA is also driving the 'Visit Mallacoota' program in conjunction with Regional Development Victoria (RDV) which aims to increase the capability of MDBTA to assist in building economic resilience and to restore confidence in local businesses and community. This includes the message that Mallacoota is 'open for business', with the aim of encouraging new and returning visitors back to our region to explore everything it has to offer.

Economic Outlook

Awareness of the broader economic outlook is important to how we approach our local post bushfire/COVID-19 economic recovery.

Australia has just emerged from a brief period of recession. However, the Reserve Bank governor is warning recovery from the recession is likely to be "uneven and drawn out".⁸¹ While economic indicators are positive, some parts of the economy are in difficulty.

The economic outlook is

- Structural changes to the economy and employment with the danger of long-term unemployment if people are not matched to jobs during the recovery phase.
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) returning to pre-COVID levels towards the end of 2021.
- Escalating trade tensions with China albeit domestic consumption is seen to be the key to Australia's post-pandemic recovery.⁸²

⁸¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-02/australia-september-quarter-economic-growth-gdp-figures/12934336>

⁸² <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news> 2nd December 2020 Australia's economy rebounds sharply in third-quarter from COVID-19 recession.

- The reduction or cessation of stimulus packages, such as JobSeeker.

On the upside:

- Existing stimulus packages may be replaced with a stimulus of a different nature, such as nation and infrastructure building.
- A commitment by utilities providers to 'hardening' critical communications infrastructure. For example, extended battery life for mobile towers and satellite backup for communications networks.
- A range of grant opportunities including the Local Economic Recovery and Community Recovery and Resilience grant programs.
- Technological advances opening up new ways to connect, work and learn.
- Initiatives encouraging purchases from regional areas such as Click for Vic and Buy from the Bush.
- Regional lobby groups and partnerships, such as the Gippsland Regional Partnership, lobbying for regional investment and remediation of infrastructure shortfalls.

While the national outlook might look gloomy in the short term, the conditions which are onerous for some sectors give rise to many opportunities for our community. In particular:

- A predicted downturn in international travel creates more openings for domestic tourism.
- Advances in technology, and a commitment to improving connectivity, enable additional, different industries and enterprises, such as social enterprises, online and cottage industries. Such ventures do not displace existing businesses and are compatible with our economic, environmental, and social values.
- Use of local trades and labourers for economic stimulus infrastructure projects such as roads and utilities enhancements.
- Working from home (WFH) is becoming a new norm. An associated trend is decentralisation, a shift away from living in major cities to regional locations.

Strategic Research Studies

The economic outlook describes future conditions and their impact on our community. Strategic research studies provide us with insight into how we can develop local initiatives and explore innovative approaches to overcome economic challenges and build resilience. Both approaches give rise to opportunities for new business and employment opportunities.

We are fortunate to have the services of Dr Nicola Watts who has been engaged through the Australian Government's Strengthening Business Service to assist with business and economic initiatives. She is working with the MDBTA and with individual businesses and is supporting co-ordination across other levels of government.

Current research topics are on Smart Specialisation and Digital Platforms.

Smart Specialisation

The following is taken from a paper written by Dr Watts.⁸³ Dr Watts notes Smart Specialisation is not an appropriate and necessary response to the immediate hardship that businesses and communities face in the aftermath of disruption and disaster but rather provides a longer-term approach for collaborative place-based development.

Smart Specialisation is a place-based approach whereby community and local businesses/industry work in partnership with government and knowledge institutions.

Smart Specialisation focuses on three areas:

- Smart – identifying the region's own strengths and comparative assets
- Specialised – prioritising research and innovation investment in competitive area/s
- Strategic – defining a shared vision for regional innovation.

A focus is on identifying complementary linkages both within the region and across other regions.

Gippsland was the first region outside Europe to be registered on the European Union's (EU) Smart Specialisation Platform through a collaboration between the Latrobe Valley Authority, University of Melbourne and RMIT, and work undertaken so far is showing promising results for revitalising regional economies.

In our Mallacoota and District context, regional specialisations which are Mallacoota's current key drivers and likely future drivers of our economy include:

- Tourism/Eco-tourism – Mallacoota has a long history of attracting visitors and could be well-positioned to continue to align with macro-trends⁸⁴ in the travel and tourism sectors which are also compatible with Mallacoota's social and environmental values (pristine wilderness environment, sustainability etc).
- Marine related activities:
 - Recreational fishing
 - Commercial fishing and seafood harvesting
 - Boating Infrastructure and commercial diving
 - Water-based transport/boat charters/boat hire
 - Marine infrastructure maintenance
 - Small boat building (power, sea-kayaks)
- Food:
 - Fish/Seafood harvesting and processing
 - Indigenous foods.⁸⁵

⁸³ Watts N. (2020) *Smart Specialisation (S3) and Authentic Engagement for Positive Futures*. Linked In.

⁸⁴ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/lists/top-travel-trends-in-2020/>; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandrataly/2020/12/31/the-four-biggest-travel-trends-for-2020/?sh=54b9b7541ced>; <https://bigseventravel.com/2019/10/2020-travel-trends-the-7-top-things-to-watch-out-for/>;

⁸⁵ Email from Dr Watts dated 2nd December 2020

Digital Economy

The global economy is undergoing a digital transformation; that is, more and more economic activity is taking place online.

One manifestation of this transformation is a paradigm shift in the way we work with less need for a permanent office. More and more people are realising they can work pretty much anywhere with stable internet and telecommunications infrastructure. This has given rise to the ‘digital nomad’ – a person who earns a living working online in various locations of their choosing (rather than a fixed business location)⁸⁶.

Mary O’Malley, a local documentary maker and digital media consultant, and Meg Allan, a local business owner with a focus on sustainable economics, are developing a paper on promoting Mallacoota as a destination for digital nomads. Their research suggests digital nomads desire a co-working space. Part of their project is looking at how to provide a co-working space to facilitate online/digital firms (transient and permanent). (See [digital hub](#).)

This ties in well with the creative endeavours of locals -such as Kristin Rule, Mary O’Malley, Larry Gray, and others - which include film making and editing, music composition and animation. Kristin, Mary, and Larry are interested in mentoring and teaching interested locals.

COVID-19 has seen working from home (WFH) shifting into the mainstream with an associated trend being decentralisation, a shift from living in capital cities to regional and rural locations. Knowledge-based industries such as consulting, writing, and designing are conducive to home-based work. Enticing more digital nomads to our district also assists with knowledge exchange and bolstering the ideas and skills of local people.

The digital economy also creates opportunities in the creative, education, research and health and wellbeing sectors:

- Creative arts and culture
 - Creative arts and crafts
 - Jewellery – Mallacoota Abalone Pearls Australia (MAPA)
 - Indigenous culture
- Education and Research
 - Caring for Country
 - Conservation
- Health and Well-being
 - Healthcare/services for an ageing population
 - Telehealth.

There are potential synergies within all the above to guide innovation and collaboration across community, business, government, and knowledge institutions to support Mallacoota’s aspirations of being a sustainable and vibrant community.

Regional economic drivers and specialisations in turn support secondary service provision.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Oxford dictionary

⁸⁷ Dr Watts email dated 2nd December 2020

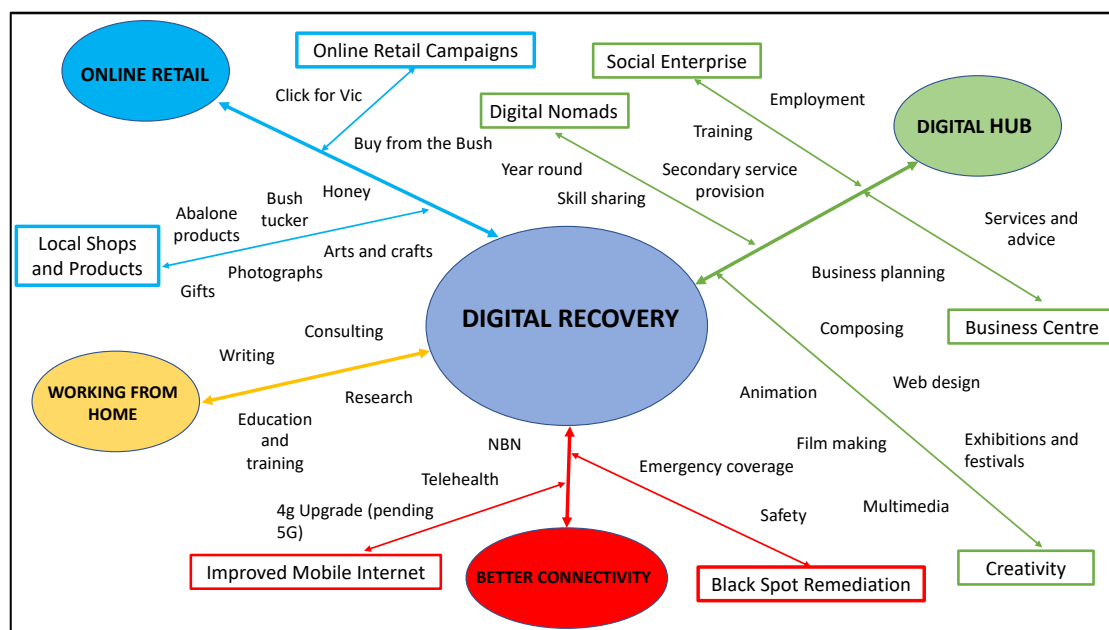


Figure 30: Our Vision and Beyond - Digital Recovery

Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide access to employment and training, or help the environment.

Using the power of the marketplace to solve the most pressing societal problems, social enterprises are commercially viable businesses that exist to benefit the public and the community, rather than shareholders and owners. A social enterprise:

- has a defined primary social purpose environmental or other public benefit,
- derives a substantial portion of its income from trade, and
- reinvests 50 per cent or more of annual profits towards achieving the social purpose.⁸⁸

As of 2016, our unemployment was at 10%. Structural changes to the economy could see this figure rise. At the same time, our recovery process necessitates new and different skills sets and ventures as we seek to rejuvenate our landscape and rebuild our homes and infrastructure.

Ways in which social enterprises could provide employment pathways include:

- employment training and support for disadvantaged groups,
- the creation or maintenance of products and/or services in response to social or economic needs in the community, not met by the market, and
- businesses that exist to generate profit that are redistributed to social programs or charitable activities.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise/what-is-a-social-enterprise/social-enterprise-definition/>

⁸⁹ <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise/what-is-a-social-enterprise/social-enterprise-definition/>

Not only can social enterprises deliver training and employment benefits, but there are also potential flow-on effects for other businesses through secondary service provision and through collaborative efforts.

Given the focus of social enterprises is on community benefit, social enterprises can allow us to explore new economic directions commensurate with our values and can be an innovative way to integrate our history, our unique assets, and our shared vision for a vibrant and resilient future.

The Black Duck Foods case study beneath is an example of a successful local social enterprise.

BLACK DUCK FOODS

The following excerpts are from www.blackduckfoods.org.

We want to tell the story of our land. For a long time, the story of traditional agriculture was buried. Stories from Elders across the Country were ignored. We respect the keepers of these stories and acknowledge their resilience. Our stories come from a time when story began and now we are transforming these stories into new opportunities for indigenous peoples as part of a journey towards Food Sovereignty.

Black Duck Foods is social enterprise based in Mallacoota with the aim of developing and commercialising indigenous food. Founded by the author and farmer Bruce Pascoe, Black Duck foods has a vision to “explore the Old Peoples’ knowledge and to share it with wider Australia for social, nutritional and environmental purposes.”

Traditional farming systems use less land and water and fewer resources while enabling the production of nutrient-rich foods. In addition to food production, related initiatives include corporate retreats at the Black Duck Foods farm on the outskirts of Genoa and, in conjunction with Sailors Grave brewery, the development of a Dark Emu beer featuring grains grown in our region.

The Black Duck vision is to redevelop traditional food growing and country management processes for the economic benefit of indigenous people and country. Their promise reads:

1. Research what our elders did – indigenous-led research is a core value.
2. Understand how our elders managed Country – and identify what value that creates now.
3. Understand how our elders sustainably grew foods that benefited all of life on Country – identify what systems processes and methods can be implemented today.
4. Actively encourage indigenous people to be employed to learn and share this knowledge.
5. Inspire the broader Australian community to value this knowledge and reform agricultural practices across Australia for the sake of Country.
6. Develop the process so that other indigenous communities don’t have to start from scratch – paying from scratch.

Figure 31: Black Duck Foods

Status: Support for and establishment of social enterprises was one of the top five Business and Economy priorities voted by community in 2021.

Owners: Each potential social enterprise will likely have a different owner. The Economic Development department of EGSC has been very helpful in providing advice and support for new enterprises.

Demography

We are one of the oldest communities in Victoria and getting older. As of 2016, nearly half of our population of 1,166 was over sixty, nearly one-quarter was over seventy and one-seventh was over 75. In 2006, the median age of people living in Mallacoota was 51, as at 2016 this had risen to 58.

The 2021 census will give greater insight into the extent of changes to our demographic changes after the bushfires.

Potentially, we could lose a significant proportion of our population to post disaster relocation. Many people lost their homes, and some have moved away as a direct consequence. This is in addition to our normal losses as people move away to be closer to family and/or aged care and medical facilities.

We need to be mindful of the flow-on effects to our economy if the loss of our elderly is not balanced by the arrival of younger people. This could include the loss or downgrading of support services and of retail and trade businesses with commensurate loss of employment.

There are strategies we can adopt in anticipation of changes to our demography. The first is encouraging young people and families to move and/or return here. This involves fostering new job and lifestyle opportunities that are suitable for young people/families. In addition, we need facilities and amenities which will be attractive to this demographic such as recreational facilities and health care.

Another strategy is providing services that do not currently exist here, and which are needed for our elderly people, so they do not need to relocate if they do not want to. For example, more independent living units, assisted care and advanced care facilities. An added benefit might be attracting more retirees here with flow-on benefits to our economy including employment opportunities.

Critical Economic Infrastructure

Reliable internet, telecommunications, energy, and sea/air/road access are critical components of our economic infrastructure. We are working with utilities providers and regional lobby groups to significantly improve our utilities.

Mobile internet is problematic during peak tourism season. This potentially impacts health and emergency services and has a significant adverse impact on local businesses who rely on internet for payroll and other business needs. The arrival of NBN has alleviated some demand on mobile internet, but not during peak visitor periods.

There has been significant progress in addressing mobile internet coverage. See [Improved Mobile Coverage](#) in Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure.

In addition, there is a need for more commercial and industrial land to attract the types of businesses we need here.

See [Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure](#).

Projects and Initiatives

The following paragraphs contain the ideas received from members of our community pertaining to economic recovery.

Some are ideas that can be picked up by interested parties and implemented without a requirement for grant or other funding. For example, more ‘packaging’ of tourism offerings.

Other suggestions require ‘owners’; that is people or groups who will initiate, implement and manage projects going forward. Project owners are needed if projects are to be funded through available grant opportunities. The form of ownership in accordance with discrete funding program terms and conditions.

Projects and initiatives are grouped under the following broad headings:

- More strings to our economic bow
- Wilderness Workspace Mallacoota (Digital Hub)
- Tourism
- Buy Local
- Education and training.

More Strings to Our Economic Bow

The bushfires highlighted the seasonal nature of our economy. Broadening and diversifying our businesses and income will foster a year-round economy. This means:

- Identifying and encouraging new businesses and economic activities which complement existing businesses and are in line with our values.
- Creating training and employment opportunities and taking advantage of incentives for apprentices and traineeships.
- Attracting businesses here for which there is a need/market, such as a sailmaker. This includes expanding the industrial estate to open more commercial land.
- Adding value to existing business ventures.

The following table is a compilation of the ideas submitted by community members, groups, and businesses for expanding our economic base. Finding funding and expert assistance for innovative ventures to enable business diversification is a priority. To this end, we have sought assistance from Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) and EGSC.

MORE STRINGS TO OUR ECONOMIC BOW	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
Creative activities (arts, crafts, writing, multimedia, digital enterprises,	We are home to many artistic people. Creative ventures might include:

MORE STRINGS TO OUR ECONOMIC BOW	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
photography, and music...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvaging burned/felled logs to make furniture and other artefacts. • Capturing and recording our stories in different formats and storytelling. • Art, craft woodworking and metalwork classes. • Film making and editing. • Photo opportunity tours together with photography lessons. • Packages – accommodation, field trips, lessons. • Making music – classes in composing and tuition in instruments, musical camps, and weekends. • An annual Writers Camp in the tradition of E.J. Brady. • Workshops on aspects of digital enterprise.
Adding value to existing businesses	<p>Mallacoota Abalone Limited (MAL) is exploring several ideas and grants for adding value to their business including a tasting area, tours and a range of abalone-based products including a line of food products, such as sauce from abalone guts, abalone shell fertiliser. Abalone gut has been provided to Sailors Grave for Abalone Beer.</p> <p>With the right assistance, there is potential for other local businesses to build additional value into their products and services. This might include collaborating with other businesses to ‘package’ visitor experiences or adding an online element to retail ventures. A digital hub, in collaboration with local businesses, could assist with this.</p>
Events	<p>Ideas for events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the successful Wild Harvest Seafood Festival • Winter solstice celebrations • An annual forest fire management conference to be held in Mallacoota in Winter • Film festivals featuring content made in Mallacoota and District.
Horticulture and Seafood	<p>There are some fantastic food businesses featuring our local produce. We can build on these ventures through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing native plants and grasses, bush tucker and other food. • Food and drink manufacturing utilising local ingredients. See the Black Duck Foods case study at the end of this chapter. • Cooking classes utilising local ingredients such as abalone, local fish, wild grains, and bush tucker. • Holiday packages featuring regional produce, beers, and wines. This might include lake cruises, fishing trips (how to cook what you caught) and bush tucker trails and tours. • A regional cookbook. • Working with regional providers to create new products and employment. For example, Sailors Grave Brewery Dark Emu lager and Abalone Beer. MAL is working with the Moogii

opportunity in terms of tourism in the region. The attraction of existing natural assets will need to be supported by other tourist infrastructure such as quality accommodation and cafés/restaurants.” p.5

The following table depicts the suggestions which have been received to make our district more attractive for visitors and tourists.

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES	
Theme	Suggestions
Beautification Projects	<p>Ideas for making our district more attractive to visitors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement township improvement schemes through cohesive, landscapes, improved signage and artworks. <p>Refurbish commercial precincts such as Foreshore caravan park and Genoa main street.</p>
Additional Visitor Attractions	<p>We received several ideas for low impact visitor attractions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing recreational infrastructure to cater such as an upgraded skate park, BMX pump tracks and mountain bike trails. See also Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure. • More ‘packages’ – the Mallacoota and District experience cut different ways i.e. hire boat/picnic hamper combos, quilting weekends, wilderness experience packages. • Building exercise equipment into a town walking trail. • Visitor centres focusing on our unique attributes. For example, the old school site at Genoa could be transformed into a visitor centre that provides information on a variety of subjects including aboriginal healing and culture, tetrapods, bush tucker and our unique flora and fauna.
Tourist Trails	<p>Special interest groups will often travel in pursuit of hobby and interest-related attractions. Examples include food and art trails, bike and skate park trails. MAL is actively pursuing a station at Mallacoota in the Victorian Abalone Trail. With State Government support, the trail will commence at MAL and go through to Port Fairy.</p>
The Mallacoota and District Brand	<p>Several ideas were put forward for developing our ‘brand’ to appeal to a range of market segments. These ideas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and build our environmental credentials. • Projects which enhance our environmental credentials such as Dark Skies.⁹¹

Figure 34: Tourism Opportunities

⁹¹ The Dark Sky movement is an international campaign to reduce light pollution by reducing the effects of electric lighting on the environment with environmental, health and safety benefits including cutting down on energy use, protecting nocturnal animals and increasing the number of stars visible at night.

Status: Initiatives are being progressed including Maurice Ave streetscaping and the Skate Park. The Dark Skies application was unfortunately not successful.

Owners:

EGSC

MDBTA for MDBTA projects

Wilderness Workspace Mallacoota

The Wilderness Workspace Mallacoota is a project that seeks to move Mallacoota from fire to flourish, from survive to thrive and from recovery to resilience.

Referred to originally as the digital hub, the project has matured markedly since the early days of thinking, evolving into a multipurpose multi-purpose coworking, learning and innovation space. The Wilderness Workspace is supported through extensive strategic guidance and connections from the Australian Government's Strengthening Business Service and with seed funding from EGSC, the East Gippsland Community Foundation and the Regional Digital Fund.

Through strategic partnerships, it will build a culture of lifelong learning, knowledge exchange, coworking and enterprise-thinking couched in social benefit. This will be via a community capacity-building program in partnership with auspicing body, the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE); by connecting the community with lifelong learning opportunities through Gippsland East Learning and Employment Network (GELLEN) and by creating a vibrant space for residents, visitors, and researchers to work, connect and innovate together.

There is nowhere in Mallacoota and District to reliably work, study and collaborate to build economic and social resilience. Mallacoota urgently needs to expand its economic and educational offerings to sustain a viable population. This necessitates support to grow business opportunities for residents and a business hub for visitors needing to work while in town.

The bushfires revealed many vulnerabilities in Mallacoota. Prior to the fires, Mallacoota adopted a business-as-usual approach. The disruption of the fires heightened awareness of its need to do things differently and respond to broader industry shifts, particularly in areas that underpin Mallacoota's economy, such as tourism and seafood. The town relies too heavily on a peak tourist season. Our population is ageing – the 2016 census noted one eighth of our community is over the age of 75. Poor employment outcomes mean young people continue to leave town. East Gippsland has the highest rate of high school dropouts in Victoria. According to Deloitte, some 63% of all jobs will require digital capabilities by 2030 and our young people are ill-prepared.

This project is a response to these findings and has been fully endorsed by the community and supported by a feasibility study funded by East Gippsland Shire Council.

Wilderness Workspace Mallacoota is an iterative project that bridges Mallacoota and the world. The project connects industry, entrepreneurs, universities, vocational training organisations, government, and community to realise a vision to be an exemplar for remote town living. In providing a space to connect, innovate and learn together, it provides the glue for social and economic resilience into the future.

Entrepreneurship building resilience

Under its entrepreneurial remit, Wilderness Workspace will build capacity, governance and business models for projects run by different community project leaders through a staged program that includes:

- **Think Start Grow Community Incubator** for up to five community-led projects ranging from ecotourism, food experiences, boatbuilding and music engineering to environmental education.
- **Steps to start up** Taking forward the strongest community-led projects into this start-up program.
- **Social Enterprise Schools** a practical, student-led experience that develops citizenship and enterprise capabilities. Mapped to the Victorian and Australian curriculum.
- **Building Digital capability** A robust workshop program on all aspects of digital capability, from basic digital literacy to running online businesses.

The goal is to work with ACRE to unlock the power of social enterprise and entrepreneurship to create opportunities and solve local issues.

Lifelong Learning

Workspace will be the home of a 24/7 study hub, in partnership with GELLEN. An arm of the successful and sustainable Study Hub based in Bairnsdale which includes GELLEN, TAFE and Federation University, the hub will allow university students to remain in Mallacoota, while studying online anywhere in Australia and building job-ready skills through being based in an innovator/incubator environment. The TAFE partnership provides training for both accredited and non-accredited courses. A community survey has validated demand for this, particularly among 30–40-year-olds seeking to broaden local employment possibilities.

The hope is to form partnerships with universities that will bring researchers to Mallacoota to work alongside the community, sharing the research and helping locals to build capacity.

Wilderness Workspace will be the registry for key initiatives and the 'go to' place for government, entrepreneurs, and universities and aims to be a facilitator of discussions that unite all project leaders and help Mallacoota address some of the 'wicked' problems that hold it back.

Co-working and connecting

In addition to providing a reliable, digitally connected work outlet for locals, the coworking space targets digital nomads who can bring business and shareable skills to town throughout the year, breaking Mallacoota's precarious reliance on peak tourist seasons.

COVID-19 has revolutionised the way we work. Who would have thought even a year ago that a professional person could be employed in Sydney but working day to day in Mallacoota? But that is indeed what is happening. The rise of 'zoom towns' opens up enormous opportunities for Mallacoota to attract people who can work online while enjoying all that our coastal wilderness town and surrounds offer.

The arrival of NBN and the eventual bolstering of the Telstra Network make this possible.

Many regional towns soon will vie for the business of digital nomads, people who learn their living working online in various locations of their choosing rather than a fixed business address. This is a growing movement with upwards of 200,000 people participating globally.

Mallacoota has an opportunity to be on the front foot. With the backing of the Business Tourism Association, it could build a campaign to attract these kinds of workers who can populate our accommodation in the off-peak seasons. Qantaslink starting up more affordable, regular runs from Merimbula make it possible to work in Mallacoota, attend a meeting in the city for the day and be back home by evening.

Many of our existing events could be tailored to meet this market. We could offer digital nomad discounts to businesses in town and special rates on accommodation when booked for three weeks or more.

Related to this initiative could be the establishment of a social enterprise digital media hub in which professionals living in Mallacoota could mentor people in the community to work on multi-media projects around music making, videos and films, animation, storytelling, editing and other digital skills. Artists and students could showcase their works in a variety of ways – exhibitions, concerts, mini film festivals and pop-up installations. And digital nomads could eventually be enticed into this program to share their skills.

Status:

- Community consultation has been conducted which indicated support for a digital hub.
- EGSC funded a feasibility study and provided \$30,000 towards economic development.
- Detailed project plan and budget developed with ACRE.
- MADRA has written to State Ministers with responsibility for digital enterprises seeking assistance and advice.⁹²
- MOUs signed with the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship and the Community Health Infrastructure and Resilience Fund. Other funding applications have been submitted.
- ACRE will auspice Black Summer grant funds if the grant application is successful.⁹³
- The State Government has indicated funding for the Wilderness Workspace may be considered as part of the 2021-22 State budget Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) process.
- East Gippsland Community Foundation has provided seed funding of \$82,117.
- The Regional Digital Fund has provided \$45,000 for workshops and further research, with results to be delivered by June 2022.
- Substantial in-kind support has come via the Collective Leadership Program funded by the Australian Government and Regional Development Victoria.
- Discussions underway regarding partnerships with local and external organisations
- Governance/legal arrangements being explored

⁹² MADRA letters to the Ministers for Innovation, Medical Research, and the Digital Economy, the Minister for Government Services, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Creative Industries dated 8th February 2021.

⁹³ Email Mary O'Malley to MADRA 12th August 2021

- The Wilderness Workspace is working closely with project leaders across Mallacoota as part of the Collective Leadership initiative *
- The Wilderness Workspace project has received \$150k in funding to date with a total budget of \$994,847 required.

Owners:

Mary O'Malley/Meg Allan

Steering Committee: Dr Nicola Watts (Strengthening Business) Anne Kaiser (EGSC), Dr Tricia Hiley, Bel Temby (Business Tourism Association), Peter Robinson, Paris Brooke, Meg Allan, Mary O'Malley, Coran Johnson (ACRE) Peter Sacco (ACRE) Clayton Neil (ACRE).



Figure 35: Meg Allan, Mary O'Malley, Dr Tricia Hiley and Paris Brooke with a cheque from the East Gippsland Community Foundation for the Wilderness Workspace.

Buy Local

Not only can our community assist in our economic recovery through shopping and utilising local services, but we can also encourage others to sample our wares. Key is ensuring local is 'value for money' and in line with our values. For example, protection of the environment through sustainable packaging.

Ideas received under this heading include:

- A 'Shop Local' campaign.
- Promote the 'empty esky' concept.
- Encourage participation in the local Artisans and Produce markets.
- Participation in online shopping sites such as 'Click for Vic'⁹⁴ and 'Buy from the Bush'.⁹⁵
- Creation of more online shops to supplement local businesses. Local items could include abalone products, honey, jewellery, and artwork.

Figure 32 beneath provides 'buy local' examples.

⁹⁴ www.viccountrymarket.com.au

⁹⁵ www.buyfromthebush.com.au.

Status: Encourage greater participation in the local Artisans and Produce market was one of the top five Business and Economy priorities voted by community in 2021.

Owner:

Artisans and Produce Market organisers



Figure 36: Buy Local

Environmental Education and Training

Understanding our environmental values is critical to sustaining our diverse bioregion and informing how we protect our communities from natural hazards. Maintaining and enhancing the wilderness values of the Wilderness Coast and Croajingolong National Park is an important drawcard to Far East Gippsland and Mallacoota.

There are low impact ways in which we can educate ourselves and visitors on our environment including locally made films, guided nature walks, visitor centres and e-books. Such initiatives could contribute to our economy and provide employment pathways.

The Natural Environment subcommittee will identify opportunities to educate and facilitate interest, love, and passion for our biotic and abiotic components of our natural environment while highlighting our region's high conservation and biodiversity values. Ideas already identified are described in the table beneath.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
Theme	Suggestions
Environmental Studies Program	The establishment of an environment studies program will enable the community to deal with change and respect both environmental hazards and our unique values/assets. The program will target the general community, including school children, visitors, and tourists.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
	<p>Activities might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sessions and new articles about environmental protection, weed management, restricted activities etc • Interpretative signing such as maps of local attractions, walking trails. Signage could incorporate QR codes that link to additional information. • Guided bushwalks. • Mini field days (with weed/native plants etc). <p>The program would be reinforced through the dissemination of environmental awareness information through local media including the Mallacoota Mouth, 3 MGB and social media.</p>
Establish a Mallacoota Environment Education and Research Centre (MEERC)	<p>The MEERC would offer both locals and the outside world the opportunity to study the best of what our district has to offer as well as enhancing our off-season economy in an environmentally sensitive way.⁹⁶ This project has been under development for some time but requires a project owner, such as a university.</p> <p>Three initial projects have been proposed for which seed funding is required. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A residential workshop with visiting academics to explore available opportunities. • Build an observatory and obtain a community-owned telescope. • Establish a longitudinal estuarine study investigating the past, present and future health of the estuary.
Land Management industry	<p>As part of bushfire recovery, volunteer groups such as Friends of Mallacoota and the Sanctuary Wilderness Coast project are engaged in on-ground remedial works. See Chapter Nine – Environment and Biodiversity</p> <p>Volunteers cannot undertake these works alone. Increased investment by Parks Victoria and DELWP to enable improved management of our surrounding National Park and Crown Land would also increase local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Ideas in this space include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants to train and employ local people in areas such as bush, coast, pests, and fuel management. • Road verges clearance. • Certification (like Green Corp organised cert 11) and other training pathways into DELWP and Parks Victoria.

⁹⁶ Letter from MEERC project team undated

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby for more funding for land care management departments, highlighting the lack of remote job opportunities and reliance on volunteerism for emergency and other services. This includes bush, coast, pests, and fuel management.

Figure 37: Environmental Education and Training

Status:

The following initiatives were in the top five Business and Economy priorities voted by community in 2021:

- An environmental studies program including information about local flora and fauna, guided bush walks and field days.
- Land management industry certification and training together with local employment in land management projects.

Work on these initiatives has not yet commenced. MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking help to progress these initiatives.⁹⁷

Owners:

Owners are needed for the environmental studies program and land management industry initiatives.

MEERC project team (Neal Greig, Tricia Hiley et al)

⁹⁷ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021.

Chapter Nine – Environment and Biodiversity

Situated in far east Gippsland, Croajingolong National Park is one of the most pristine and untouched areas of wilderness left in Victoria with extremely high biodiversity and conservation values. The park, which covers an area of 87,500 ha and extends for 100 km along the coast, contains two wilderness zones, four reference areas and two natural catchment areas.

Adjacent to the Croajingolong National Park is the Cape Howe Marine National Park, a protected marine national park. The 4,050-hectare marine park extends from just east of Gabo Island to Cape How and the New South Wales border.

In this chapter, we look at sustaining our diverse bioregion while also protecting our communities from disasters and natural hazards. We approach this from a number of perspectives:

- Understanding our environmental values (natural resources, flora and fauna values)
- Priorities for remedial work and ongoing protection of natural and built assets including:
 - establishing a pre-2019-20 bushfires baseline,
 - on ground works,
 - fuel management, and
 - lake and estuary health.
- Human resources – the land management industry
- Environmental education.



Figure 38: Bendedore Pre and Post the Bushfires - Nov 2019 & Feb 2020 (Photos: Bryce Watts-Parker)

Our Environmental Values

The following sections are an amalgamation of information from the Mallacoota Urban Design Framework published in March 2007 together with updates provided by local

resident Bryce Watts-Parker (Bachelor of Biological Science) and other sources as referenced in footnotes.

Natural Resources

Mallacoota and District is located within the East Gippsland Lowlands Bioregion which includes the Croajingolong National Park.

Vegetation communities are diverse and are mostly untouched since pre-European settlement. These communities support rich biological assemblages and include vegetation types such as: Wet and dry eucalypt forest, Banksia woodlands, wet clay heathlands, warm-temperate rainforest, and many others. The vegetation which is largely in a highly natural state, little influenced by settlement and agriculture, is dominated by forests, but Banksia woodland and heathy woodlands, heathlands, rainforest, and riparian scrub vegetation are common around the coastal areas. Very valuable landscape character is conveyed by the indigenous vegetation and landforms.

The diversity of plant and animal species in the coastal areas of the far east of the State is partly due to the extensive retention of native vegetation when compared with other regions of Victoria, as well as biogeographic considerations as the easternmost part of coastal Victoria with strong affinities with the vegetation and fauna of New South Wales. Also, its remote nature played a critical role in its current biodiversity values and the foresight of early naturalists such as Ken Morrison and Peter Allard who connected what was originally two parks into what we know now as Croajingolong National Park.

Flora Values

Significant high-quality vegetation occurs in and around our district. There are over 1,000 native plant species found in the park, with 87 of those species being classed as rare or threatened in Victoria and eight classed as rare or threatened in Australia. There are also many good examples of hollow-bearing trees, pre-European vegetation communities and many individual trees which have been aged over 300-400 years of age.

Appendix B of the *2007 Mallacoota Urban Design Framework* outlines the extant Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) in Mallacoota and District as well as the rare or threatened flora species present (according to State and/or National listings). This list is by no means exhaustive but serves to emphasise the high significance of the flora of the Mallacoota area and its biogeographic uniqueness. The dominant vegetation around Mallacoota is the EVC Lowland Forest, an extremely broad category embracing much floristic variation.⁹⁸

The conservation status of Lowland Forest is 'Least Concern' in the bioregion however this in no way accounts for the highly distinctive local versions (subcommunities) of Lowland Forest which are dominated or co-dominated by a suite of tree species of very restricted distribution in Victoria, notably Red Bloodwood, Maiden's Gum, Mallacoota Gum, Blue-leaved Stringybark, and Rough-barked Apple. These are all rated as 'rare' in Victoria.

⁹⁸ EVCs are based on topography and soil type to assume vegetation communities. While often helpful on a landscape scale analysis, on a smaller scale undertaking assessment on the ground is more appropriate.

Labelling the Lowland Forest as of 'Least Concern' also potentially devalues our floral species, many of which are only found in our district including, but not limited to:

- Gippsland Banksia (*Banksia croajingolensis*)
- Betka Bottle Brush (*Callistemon Kenmorrisonii*)
- Genoa correa (*Correa lawrenceana* var. *genoensis*)



Figure 39: *Callistemon Kenmorrisonii* - Betka Bottlebrush (Photo: Bryce Watts-Parker)

Vegetation classification will be a factor in driving revegetation programs and future urban development and ensuring that our biodiversity and natural values are preserved and appreciated for locals, visitors, and future generations.

Fauna Values

Biodiversity levels around Mallacoota and District are high. Fauna wise, the Park supports over 52 mammalian species, a significant percentage of Australia's bird species and contains some of the richest amphibian and reptile habitat in Victoria.

The East Gippsland coast is a site of international importance for the Hooded Plover, the Eastern Bristle Bird, Diamond Pythons, Eastern Ground Parrot and potentially Death Adders and Mallacoota Burrowing crayfish, among other species.

Gipsy Point and Mallacoota are included within the Mallacoota Inlet Site of Zoological Significance. There are regular records around Mallacoota/Gipsy Point of Eastern Curlew, Sanderling, and Eastern Bristlebird. Mallacoota Inlet has breeding colonies of three species of tern, Caspian Tern, Little Tern and Crested Tern. The forests around Mallacoota Inlet, particularly on the northern shore, contain a large variety of terrestrial fauna including the Long-nosed Potoroo, Long-nosed Bandicoot and Southern Emu-wren in the wet heath near the Inlet. A large population of Ground Parrots lives near Howe Flat but are more common in coastal scrub and wet clay heathlands. Mallacoota Inlet is a very important breeding area for the White-bellied Sea Eagle.

The only Victorian population of the Eastern Bristlebird resides in Howe Flat and is an endangered species with an estimated 120-160 remaining in the wild.⁹⁹ There were similar numbers in NSW and a smaller population in Queensland¹⁰⁰, however, the 2020 bushfires had a significant effect on the NSW Eastern Bristlebirds.¹⁰¹

Diamond pythons (*Morelia spilota spilota*) are restricted to the wild and remote areas of far east Gippsland. Diamond pythons can grow up to 3 meters in length, yet anecdotally there have been recounts of diamond pythons exceeding this length. Being only one of two python species found in Victoria, Diamond pythons are threatened by increased fire regimes/climate change and predation by feral species. Diamond python have been sighted after the fires, which is promising.



Figure 40: Diamond Python (*Morelia spilota spilota*) (Photo: Bryce Watts-Parker)

There are also records of Powerful Owl from Double Creek (6km north-west of Mallacoota), and from the Shady Creek Bushland Reserve, as well as in the Mallacoota township.

In Croajingolong National Park, 306 bird species, 52 mammal species, and 26 reptile species have been recorded. This high level of avian diversity represents about half of Victoria's and a third of Australia's total bird species. Six owl species live in the forests of Croajingolong National Park. The Park is significant for some faunal species whose distribution reaches its most southerly extent, such as the Green and Golden Bell Frog and the Diamond Python. Threatened species found in the park include the Ground Parrot, Eastern Bristlebird, Smoky Mouse, and Grey-headed Flying Fox. Not surprisingly, this park is one of the most important conservation reserves in Victoria.

There is potential for inappropriate development and garden weed invasion to threaten the fauna values following the bushfires. This builds on problems already created by habitat

⁹⁹<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/after-the-fires-rare-bird-s-appearance-surprises-scientists-20210130-p56y1g.html>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10206>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/after-the-fires-rare-bird-s-appearance-surprises-scientists-20210130-p56y1g.html>

destruction. There is also potential that inappropriate fire regimes, climate change, prolonged drought and inappropriate land use will negatively impact fauna in our district.



Figure 41: Green and Golden Bell Frog (Litoria aurea) (Photo: Bryce Watts-Parker)

Our Natural Environment Priorities

Our natural environment is our district's biggest asset. We must not only preserve it but promote and protect it. Our focus is on the protection of biodiversity based on scientific principles. This involves liaising with Parks Victoria and DELWP on issues relating to vegetation management and clearing, and protection of endangered species and their habitat together with collaborations with universities, environmental organisations, and agencies.

Longer-term aims include supporting and promoting sustainable tourism that will retain our natural and community values, encouraging sustainable and renewable energy projects and scientifically backed, viable and well-resourced fuel management programs.

Status: Support and promote sustainable tourism in keeping with our natural and community values was one of the top five Environment and Biodiversity priorities voted by community in 2021.

Owner:

MDBTA

Establishing a Pre-bushfires Baseline...

The extent of the damage caused by the bushfires to the natural environment has yet to be fully examined. Determining a pre bushfires baseline is a necessary first step for developing goals and plans to conserve our remaining natural values, for regeneration and repopulation initiatives and to prevent invasion by weeds and pests.

The 2016 Bush Blitz report and the Croajingolong Management Plan are important sources of information for this purpose.

2016 BUSH BLITZ

The following summary was written by Australian Biological Resources Study – ABRS and Museums Victoria Staff in 2019.¹⁰²

Bush Blitz expeditions hosted by Museums Victoria were conducted in Croajingolong National Park during November and December 2016. The expeditions focused on sections of the park east and west of Mallacoota in addition to a marine component including surveys of Gabo Island, Cape Howe Marine National Park and nearby coastal areas

Museums Victoria notes this work was important because:

- The eastern and southern biotas meet in the Croajingolong National Park.
- Very little biodiversity work had been undertaken in the park, particularly the eastern part prior to the Bush Blitz. For example, the Bush Blitz included the first known moth surveys in the eastern part of the park.

During the two expeditions, approximately 1776 species were recorded. At least 702 species had not been recorded previously in the areas studied and 25 of those may be completely new to science (one echinoderm, 13 true bugs, five snails, one flowering plant, one fern and four marine algae and a partridge in a pear tree). Ten threatened animal species were recorded and 72 state-listed plant species, including 18 that are listed as Threatened.

Survey highlights included:

- A significant increase in species records from the region for all groups targeted.
- The collection of frog and reptile tissue samples and voucher specimens
- The collection of many new records for the park that provide valuable information about species distribution, including 286 species of moth.
- The discovery of a sea cucumber *Pseudocnus sentus* – a new record for Australia.
- The location of several conservation-listed species of plants and animals.

Figure 42: Bush Blitz 2016

Status: Not commenced

Owner: A project owner is needed

On Ground Works

As part of bushfire recovery, and to preclude further damage, on ground remedial works which have commenced include weed removal, pest control, erosion control and revegetation projects. A key consideration is maintaining the natural appeal of our townships (trees, indigenous plantings, and animal life) whilst giving proper regard to the safety of the town's population.

There are already several local groups working in this space and it should be possible to build on this strong base:

¹⁰² <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/16726>

- The Friends of Mallacoota has a highly active Bushcare and Coastcare Weeding Group which has worked for many years to contain the spread of environmental weeds in town and on the Shire-managed Coastal Reserve.
- The Sanctuary Youth group has also initiated the Wilderness Coast Project which matches coastal care management practices with recreational activities. The focus is on volunteer engagement, community connections, and food/music.
- A joint project with Rotary Balwyn and Friends of Mallacoota (FOM) saw seed sent from our district where it will be grown by school children and community members. Some will be given to residents to help rebuild their gardens and some will be used for revegetation. Seeds for propagation include the endangered Betka bottlebrush, the Running Postman ground cover and Casuarina seeds which are the main food source for Glossy Black Cockatoos.
- Through collaboration and support of the FOM, a nursery has been established for growing endangered plants, plants for revegetation and for sale.

Threatened Flora Project

FOM, Envite, the Royal Botanic Gardens and Latrobe University (LTU) are collaborating in the Threatened Flora project which aims to protect and promulgate ten endangered, rare, and threatened species. These species are:

- Betka Bottlebrush (*Callistemon kenmorrisonii*)
- Tiny Spyridium (*Spyridium cinereum*)
- Boggy Creek Bottlebrush (*Callistemon nyallingensis*)
- Bolwarra (*Eupomatia laurina*)
- Gippsland/Shipwreck Banksia (*Banksia croajingolensis*)
- Buchan Blue wattle (*Acacia caerulescens*)
- Forresters bottlebrush (*Callistemon forresterae*)
- Swamp Grevillea (*Grevillea patulifolia*)
- Hakea Yambulla (Yet to be surveyed)
- Heathy Mirbelia (*Mirbelia rubiifolia*)

Activities include a post-fire population survey and collection of genetic material, mapping of known sites and the introduction of new genetic materials to strengthen stock and promote genetic diversity and adaptability. This project is also important for informing fuel management actions.

Mallacoota Endemic Garden

The Mallacoota Endemic Garden is being established around the Parks Office on the corner of Buckland and Allan Drives.

This project aims to establish a landscaped native garden featuring endemic, rare, and endangered plant species found in Mallacoota and District. The Mallacoota Endemic Garden (MEG) will present as a space for reflection, education and ultimately creates a space for the unique flora of the areas to be appreciated. Additionally, the garden will act as an insurance population where seeds and cuttings can be collected for conservation, scientific studies and encourage community interest.

Many endemic, rare and endangered species were impacted by the Black Summer bushfires, this space will act as a potential source for in-situ conservation for these species in the event of future large-scale landscape fires.

Potential starting species for the project - pictured in order beneath - include:

- Betka Bottlebrush (*Callistemon kenmorrisonii*)
- Gippsland Banksia (*Banksia croajingolensis*)
- Genoa Callistemon (*Callistemon forresterae*)
- Genoa Correa (*Correa lawrenceana* var. *genoensis*)
- Tiny Spyridium (*Spyridium cinereum*)
- Downy Zieria (*Zieria cytisoides*) & (*Zieria littoralis*)
- Heathy Mirbelia (*Mirbelia rubifolia*)



Figure 43: Mallacoota Endemic Garden species

As the project develops, further suitable plants can be incorporated into the MEG.

Funding for this project has been received from Envite (\$10k), Ride for Regrowth (\$10k), Parks Victoria (\$7k for signage) and \$2k from FOM.

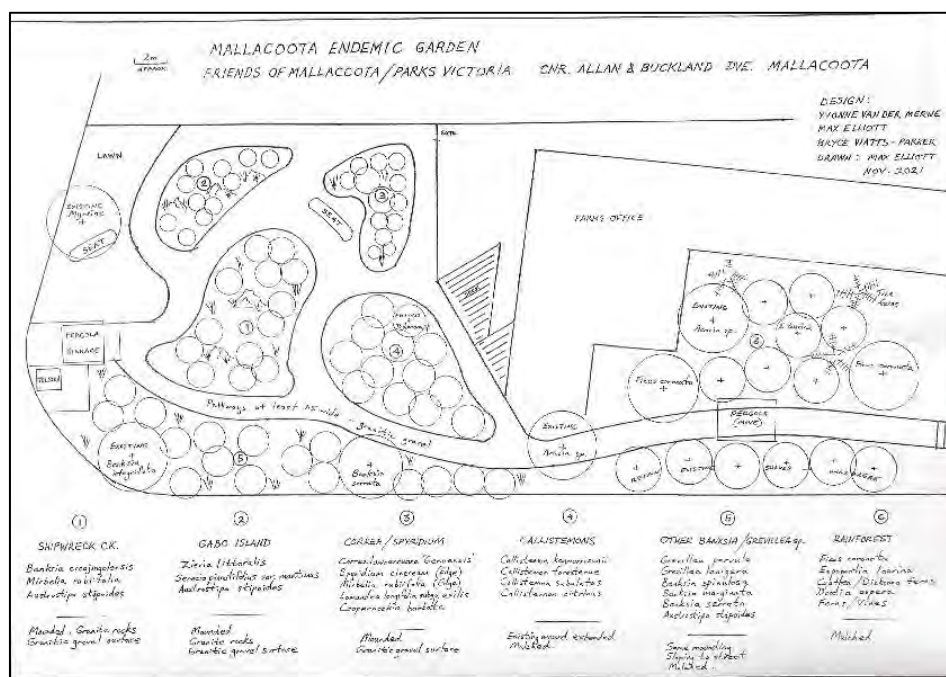


Figure 44: Mallecoota Endemic Garden

Land Management Industry

Protection and management of our pristine wilderness environment calls for additional human resources, both paid and volunteer. This might be through increased personnel for Parks Victoria (PV) and the Department of DELWP but also through volunteer training opportunities through organisations such as Envite.

In addition to environmental benefits, there would be flow-on effects to the economy through increased employment opportunities. See also [Environmental Education and Training](#) in Chapter Eight Business and Economy.

ENVITE

Envite Environment is the Environment Division of Workways Australia, a not-for-profit, charitable and community services organisation which provides training in conservation and land management skills including bush regeneration techniques, native and weed plant identification and native plant propagation.

Envite received grant funding through the Local Economic Recovery program to stand up training Natural Resource Management (NRM) crews in Orbest and Mallecoota and their surrounding districts. The crews comprise young and indigenous residents of the local areas working towards formal accreditation in key conservation and land management modules supervised by qualified Envite staff. They will work on vegetation monitoring, weed management, active restoration and other NRM and community projects across tenure.¹⁰³

Envite has employed two local supervisors– Bryce Watts-Parker and Sandy Duthie – each on a part-time basis.

¹⁰³ Email from Abigail Wills State Manager Environmental Services dated 12th of February 2021 to MADRA and Friends of Mallecoota

Bryce has a team of three trainees and the role of this team is to identify and protect threatened flora and maintain the Mallacoota nature reserves. There are eight shire-managed nature reserves: Betka, Shady Gully, Davis Creek, Gipsy Point, Bastion Point/Mortimers Paddock, and three lakeside locations. The work includes:

- Weed removal
- Erosion control through planting, log placement and biotic/abiotic measures
- Environmental restoration and enhancing biodiversity through the creation of habitat and improved connectivity
- Saltmarsh restoration through bank stabilisation
- Revegetation projects including establishing ground covers, weed removal, increasing the footprint of rainforest pockets, promoting resilience through succession planting and the use of pioneer species.

See Appendix H

Sandy has four trainees. The role of this team is to assist private and public property owners with tree planting, fencing and light construction. In addition to paid employment, trainees receive accreditation towards TAFE Course Cert 2 in Ecosystem and Land Management and other qualifications, such as chainsaw and other equipment tickets.

Figure 45: Envite

Status:

MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking action on the following initiatives which are in the top five Environment and Biodiversity priorities voted by community in 2021:

- Building on the work of existing volunteer groups and agencies, ongoing remedial works including weed removal, coast care, pest control, erosion control and revegetation projects. (Repair)
- Seek additional human and other resources for the protection and management of our wilderness (Ongoing maintenance)

In September 2021, Parks Victoria advertised an additional three x two-year Fixed Term Positions for Ranger (Field Services) to deliver fire recovery services. The roles encompass maintenance of assets, infrastructure, and facilities and the field delivery of fire recovery projects.¹⁰⁴

Owners:

FOM

Parks Victoria

DELWP

EGSC

Envite

Owners:

¹⁰⁴ Dale Yeates (Parks Victoria) email Peter Hancock (MADRA) dated 3rd September 2021

FOM

Parks Victoria

DELWP

EGSC

Envite

Fuel Management

The Mallacoota Bushfire Fuel Management Group acknowledges the trauma suffered by our community in 2019-20 and is committed to work at a speed that supports the whole community. We have been presented with a unique opportunity to access our forests with greater ease than is normal and seizing this opportunity is beneficial.

The group existed prior to the 2019-20 bushfires and has made considerable progress on a fuel management work plan. The group which includes community members as well as government fire prevention agencies aims to implement this plan and provide our community with education on fuel management and to implement, review and revise fuel management plans going forward.

Key initiatives of the Fuel Management Group include:

- Developing and implementing a fire management plan to protect high-risk areas in Mallacoota and district.
- Recording and publishing a series of webinars on fuel management to give more knowledge to our community so we feel represented, safer, and armed to make informed decisions about fuel management.¹⁰⁵
- Developing a three-year rolling action plan which will roll over annually and contain information about which fuel management initiatives will be implemented in the current year.
- Overseeing the implementation of the fuel management action plan.
- An annual review of the fuel management action plan.
- Revisiting and evaluating fuel management plan initiatives every five years and adjusting the fuel management plan as necessary.

In line with the initiatives above, the Fuel Management Group is currently working on plans for high-risk areas. Current areas under discussion are Shady Gully, Mortimer's Paddock, the back of Terra Nova Drive and the Western Front. Draft suggestions for these areas were presented to community members for consideration at the Mallacoota Community Clubrooms on the 28th of April 2021. Management plans for these areas have been approved by the Joint Fuel Management Group which is responsible for implementation.

Follow on areas under consideration include Karbeethong, Lakeside Drive, Genoa, and Gipsy Point.

The need to maintain firebreaks is self-evident, however, there is potential for them to be also used as recreational facilities for such activities as walking, riding, and picnics.

¹⁰⁵ The Fuel Management webinar series is available at madrecovery.com

Within the Mallacoota township, several people have expressed concern about burned trees and a build-up of debris close to residential areas. This has caused concern and distress to the extent some have offered to clear trees and debris on public land. In addition to personal safety and liability issues, this is potentially harmful from an environmental perspective as some rare plants have been discovered among the debris.

Given evident trauma about this issue, MADRA wrote to East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC) in February 2021 seeking information and context about this issue together with advice on fuel management and clearing of burned trees within the Mallacoota township.

In April 2021 we received a response that stated:

- Council supports the important work being undertaken by the Fuel Management Group.
- Council is undertaking an assessment of the debris accumulated along Lakeside Drive, considering both fuel risk and environmental values to determine a recommended course of action. Where this is beyond EGSC's available funding, EGSC will advocate for funding to undertake the necessary works.
- Council acknowledges some fire impacted vegetation on council managed land may not regenerate and that such vegetation is a reminder of the impacts of the fires to some people. Recognising the range of views in the Mallacoota community in relation to the management of vegetation, it is neither practical nor appropriate to remove all the fire killed vegetation. Such vegetation can also still play an important role as habitat.
- Where it is established that vegetation is not likely to regenerate by itself, the vegetation can be assessed in line with previous and emerging habitat characteristics and restoration based on supporting vegetation development in priority areas. Necessarily this work will be targeted and focus on priority areas. Council has assessed and removed fire killed trees along roadways and walking tracks that have been assessed as hazardous. However, the nature of fire killed vegetation is that it will continue to deteriorate and may become hazardous over time. Council will continue to monitor this and respond to community reports. Where fire killed trees are assessed by Council as hazardous and posing a risk to roadways, walking tracks or similar, Council will take action to address the hazard.
- Some members of the community sought permission to clean up debris on council managed land. Depending on the context there may be a range of views about whether material should be removed or not, and that there is a need to identify and protect relevant environmental values, and that some environmental regulations may apply. Within this context, members of the community can seek consent from Council to undertake works on Council managed land. Most commonly this occurs through groups such as Landcare. There are inherently a range of safety risks in undertaking vegetation works and so in general such works need to be undertaken by suitably trained people with the necessary equipment.
- Noting your advice about the community interest in these issues, we are preparing communications for our monthly recovery update, which is published in the Mallacoota Mouth.

Status:

- Community consultation on fuel management plans is well underway.

- An annual review of Fuel Management Action Plans together with overseeing the implementation of Fuel Management Action Plans were among the top five Environment and Biodiversity priorities voted by community in 2021. MADRA has written to BRV and EGSC seeking action.¹⁰⁶
- EGSC has employed Ethos to assess residual fire damaged vegetation so a plan can be developed.
- In 2022, a conditional grant of \$50k was received from the East Gippsland Community Foundation for a Fuel Management Scoping Study.

Owners:

Fuel Management Group

EGSC

Lake and Estuary Health

The EGCMA and Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI)¹⁰⁷ visited Mallacoota in late February 2021 to host a series of community events including boat trips and ‘walk and talks’. The aim was to discuss how the catchments are responding following the bush fires and to answer questions about environmental recovery.

Concerns have been raised about the sand build-up in front of the foreshore caravan park and the shallowness of the main channel. This is not the result of the bush fires but rather the drought situation, which means there is more sand coming in from the sea than is being pushed out by river flow.

Albeit the entrance has been artificially opened in recent times to protect lake infrastructure, this could cause other damage to our ecosystems, such as fish kills relating to the loss of the oxygen layer in the waters flowing out to sea. Notwithstanding, the assessment of the EGCMA is that it may be possible to deepen the foreshore channel without environmental damage.

EGCMA has employed three bushfire monitors/community engagement monitors covering 63 sites across East Gippsland including 21 sites in Mallacoota and District. One part-time position is based in Mallacoota and is currently filled by Bryce Watts-Parker. Role responsibilities include:

- Taking samples of river water to test for turbidity, conductivity and oxygen levels and comparison with historic data
- Water monitoring
- Community education including boat tours and school activities
- Fence replacement to prevent stock ingress.

Other activities being undertaken by the EGCMA include:

- Revegetation and weeding along riverbanks

¹⁰⁶ MADRA letter to the CEOs of BRV and EGSC dated 24th June 2021

¹⁰⁷ The Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research (ARI) is the biodiversity research organisation for the government of Victoria, Australia. It provides advice on ecologically sustainable land and water management issues and about threatened native flora and fauna.

- Erosion control and flood prevention measures.

Overall, our lake and estuary health is good. The following is an excerpt from an article that was written for the Mallacoota Mouth to explain why the bottom lake was smelly in the aftermath of the fires!

EGCMA ARTICLE RE LAKE HEALTH – 18th February 2021

Graeme Dear, CEO of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA), said” There has been a bit of discussion in the community lately around the health of the Mallacoota Lake and a smelly odour.”

With consistent rain since the fires, the inlet has maintained a good entrance creating more tidal effect in the inlet. This rain has also helped with the regeneration of native vegetation following the bushfires.

The bushfires and rain events have increased the level of nutrients and sediment entering the waterways. This creates increased aquatic plant growth throughout the inlet, including algae. Algae has positive benefits for the inlet as nutrients are consumed by the growing algae, which in turn helps promote growth in small animal life, which larger animals, fish and birds need.

With the increased tidal effect from the entrance, the algae get exposed and tend to die off. This in turn creates a smelly odour as the algae breaks down. This is just one of many natural processes in tidal areas and following bushfires in the catchment.

Figure 46: EGCMA Article re Lake Health 18th of February 2021

Environmental Education

Understanding our environmental values is critical to sustaining our diverse bioregion and informing how we protect our communities from natural hazards. Maintaining and enhancing the wilderness values of the Wilderness Coast and Croajingolong National Park is an important drawcard to Far East Gippsland and Mallacoota.

The program will be reinforced through the dissemination of environmental awareness information through local media including the Mallacoota Mouth, 3 MGB and social media.

See also [Environmental Education and Training](#) in Chapter Eight Business and Economy for proposals for an environmental studies program and a Mallacoota Environmental Education and Research Centre.

Chapter Ten – Financing Our Recovery

Operating Budget

BRV has provided us with an operating budget of \$25,000 per annum to cover MADRA's operating expenses.

EGSC received grant funding through the *Bushfire Recovery Grants for Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Community Services Organisations (CSOs)* program to pay the salaries of our administration staff.

Grant Funding Programs

There are numerous government and philanthropic grant funding programs that are targeted at bushfire and disaster recovery for communities and local governments.

The table beneath provides a summary of the grant programs that have been made available to our community as of 26th February 2022.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY GRANT FUNDING PROGRAMS	
Program	Purpose
Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)	The FRRR is a not-for-profit organisation that provides funding and capacity building support at the hyper-local level. The FRRR uses its reach, relationships, networks, and know-how to align funding – big and small – to community-led solutions that build resilience and long-term viability and vitality of smaller remote, rural and regional communities across Australia.
Local Economic Recovery program (LER)	The \$68.6 million Local Economic Recovery (LER) program is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments and will fund local projects vital for community recovery, support economic stimulus projects, and boost industry and jobs across bushfire-affected regions. There is 60/40 split between bushfire affected councils and communities. The final of the three LER grant rounds closes on Monday 11 April 2022.
Bushfire Recovery Grants for Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Community Services Organisations (CSOs)	These Bushfire Recovery grants are for the purpose of helping councils, charities and community organisations support recovery, redevelopment, and resilience after the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires, and to build capacity and preparedness for the future.
Bushfire Recovery Grants for Community Facilities	Funding of up to \$50,000 is available to support local organisations to improve community facilities in fire-affected communities. An upgrade to the Genoa Hall was funded through the program.
The Victorian Bushfire Appeal	The Victorian Government has partnered with Bendigo Bank to establish the Victorian Bushfire Appeal to manage donated funds. 100% of donated funds will go directly to communities in need. The Mallacoota Skate Park rebuild is funded by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY GRANT FUNDING PROGRAMS	
Program	Purpose
Department of Health and Human Services Personal Hardship Assistance Program	The Personal Hardship Assistance Program aids people experiencing financial hardship because of a single house fire or a natural disaster-related emergency such as bushfire, flood, severe storm, or earthquake.
Victorian Aids and Equipment Program	The Victorian Department of Health fund the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program which provides subsidised aids and equipment, home, and vehicle modifications to help people live safely and independently in their own home. Re-issued items of equipment are also available at no cost to the eligible person.
Significant Sporting Events Program	Run by the Department of Sport and Recreation Victoria, The Significant Sporting Events Program helps sporting, community and event organisations to deliver significant sporting events in Victoria.
Emergency Sporting Equipment Program	Run by the Department of Sport and Recreation Victoria, this grant program aids grassroots sport and active recreation clubs and organisations to replace essential sporting or first aid equipment that has been lost or destroyed because of fire, flood, significant storm event, theft, or criminal damage.
East Gippsland Shire Community Grants	The grants programs aim to support local community-based groups, organisations and in some categories, individuals. Through these programs, the Shire supports a wide range of services and innovative activities that strengthen our communities, encourage environmental sustainability, health, and well-being, while fostering cultural diversity, the arts, and local economies.
East Gippsland Community Foundation	Through a community-led approach, the Foundation focuses on distributing funds to communities impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires. This includes projects linked with Community Recovery Committee (CRC) recovery plans and with strong evidence of priorities driven by meaningful community engagement. Local people know what they need and want for their communities.
Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants	Communities still recovering from the 2019-20 bushfires will share access to a new Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants program from the Australian Government. The grants will fund projects to support social, economic, built, and environmental recovery. This program will be open for applications from 22 July 2021 to 22 September 2021. The guide amount for grants for our local government area (LGA) is \$4.5m

Figure 47: Bushfire Recovery Grant Funding Programs

Donations

We have received many generous donations from organisations and individuals. In addition, philanthropic organisations Minderoo and the NewsCorp Bushfire Fund sought copies of this plan with a view to how they might fund some of the initiatives herein.

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Appendix A – Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABRS	Australian Biological Resources Study
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
ACRE	Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AR	Augmented Reality
ARI	Arthur Rylah Institute
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
VR	Virtual Reality
AV	Ambulance Victoria
BAL	Bushfire Attack Level
BRV	Bushfire Recovery Victoria
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CG	Coast Guard
CHIRF	Community Health, Infrastructure and Resilience Fund
CRCs	Community Recovery Committees
DET	Department of Education and Training Victoria
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Victoria
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria
DGR	Deductible Gift Recipient
DH	Department of Health Victoria
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services Victoria
DRA	Disaster Relief Australia
EGCMA	East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
EGMI	East Gippsland Marketing Inc
EGSC	East Gippsland Shire Council
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
ERC	Expenditure Review Committee
ESIA	Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority

EV	Electric Vehicle
FFMV	Forest Fire Management Victoria
FIFO	Fly In Fly Out
FOM	Friends of Mallacoota
FRRR	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GELLEN	Gippsland East Learning and Employment Network
GLCH	Gippsland Lakes Complete Health
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
IFR	Instrument Flight Rules
IGEM	Inspector General for Emergency Management
ITP	Victorian Government – Digital Connectivity Service Program
LGA	Local Government Area
LIMP	Local Incident Management Plan/s
LIRL	Low Intensity Runway Lighting
LTU	Latrobe University
MADRA	Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc
MADTL	Mallacoota and District Tool Library I
MAL	Mallacoota Abalone Limited
MDBATA	Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association
MDHSS	Mallacoota District Health and Support Service
MEERC	Mallacoota Environment Education and Research Centre
MEG	Mallacoota Endemic Garden
NBRA	National Bushfire Recovery Agency
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRRA	National Resilience and Recovery Agency
NTM	Notice to Mariners
PAL	Pilot Activated Lighting
PBI	Public Benevolent Institution
PEST	Political Economic Social Technological

PFOS	perfluorooctane sulfonate
RAIS	Rapid Assessment Impact Survey
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
RCP	Commonwealth Regional Connectivity Program
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctor Service
RFS	Rural Fire Service
RMT	Recovery Management Team
RSOs	Recovery Support Officers
SES	State Emergency Services
SLSV	Surf Life Saving Victoria
SSC	State Suburbs
VEC	Victorian Electoral Commission
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VOZR	Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules
VSBA	Victorian School Building Authority
WFH	Working from Home
YACVic	Youth Affairs Council Victoria

Appendix B – Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder is either an individual, group or organisation who is impacted by, or has an interest in, the outcome of a project or process. Many people were directly impacted by the bushfires or are involved in some way as part of the recovery process.

Our major stakeholder groups are:

- community members (including residents, absentee property owners and visitors) and organisations who were impacted by the fires,
- our external recovery delivery partners,
- our external recovery funding partners, and
- our local organisations and interest groups.

There is some crossover between our funding and delivery partners.

A stakeholder analysis is a tool for identifying the needs, interests, and concerns of stakeholders to ensure these are taken into consideration as part of action planning.

This stakeholder analysis looks at the services and support needed by those directly impacted by the bushfires. We also look at the needs of our funding and service delivery partners who will be guided by our community-led recovery priorities and preferences.

Finally, we do a stocktake of the many local organisations and interest groups that have a critical role in our community-led recovery through service delivery, charity, and advocacy and as the basis of our vital social connections and networks.

Community Members and Organisations Impacted by the Bushfires

The table beneath provides an overview of community members and organisations impacted by the fires and their recovery needs.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANISATIONS IMPACTED BY THE BUSHFIRES	
Group	Needs/Comments
Housing	
People who lost homes or sustained property damage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to financial and other assistance to find new housing and to replace lost items• Mental health support• Fast-tracking of planning and building permits• Assistance with insurance and other claims• Rental properties and/or alternative accommodation• Affordable accommodation• Assistance to clean up fire damaged properties• Case management• Assistance to access philanthropic assistance and donations
People who were renting properties that were destroyed.	
People who may lose their accommodation when rental agreements expire.	
People who are living in pod homes, caravans, or other temporary accommodation.	
People who have been unable to rebuild due to issues with planning and building permits.	
Lack of available housing for residents and visiting tradespeople and specialists.	

COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANISATIONS IMPACTED BY THE BUSHFIRES	
Group	Needs/Comments
Non-resident homeowners who may have been financially affected by the COVID-19 moratorium on rental agreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing security on cessation of rental moratorium.• Assistance to move back into homes.• Ongoing financial assistance in the face of COVID cost increases, including fuel and building materials
People who do not feel ready to make housing decisions.	
Vulnerable People	
People who are suffering mental and/or physical trauma as a result of the bushfires: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those who lost homes/suffered property damage.• Residents otherwise impacted.• Volunteers• Emergency service workers• Medical workers• Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing mental health support• Ongoing medical assistance• Access to services• Short term financial support• A productive, collaborative approach to common issues• Recognition of special needs and pathways for meeting needs.• Financial advice• Legal advice• Understanding how to navigate all avenues of assistance• Case management• Social connections• Social events• Training and other support to find employment• Access to special equipment and aids• Protection of privacy (advice on how to deal with media queries/Good Visitor Guide)• Ways to gently commemorate the fires• An understanding we will recover, be more resilient and have some better amenities going forward.
People who lost their livelihoods (jobs and/or income-producing assets)	
People in danger of slipping between the cracks because they will not seek help or do not know how.	
People not part of a group or organisation who may be isolated through lack of social connections/networks.	
Young people and children.	
People who have not yet come back to Mallacoota and District.	
People who identify as being part of Mallacoota and District but live in NSW and may have difficulty accessing local services.	
People who are living with a disability.	
People who reside in adjacent communities and who may benefit from joint support projects and opportunities.	
Visitors who were stranded here during the fires	
Bushfire Recovery Hub walk-ins.	
Emergency Services	
Our local volunteer Emergency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disaster planning and preparedness• Local knowledge and resources• Community assurance of safety
Visiting Emergency Services	

COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANISATIONS IMPACTED BY THE BUSHFIRES	
Group	Needs/Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community education and preparedness• Incorporating bushfires lessons learned into Local Incident Management Plans (LIMP) and other preparedness plans.• Provisions around future emergency proofing/mitigation must consider other emergency situations. For example: unstable land due to loss of vegetation• Access issues• Overlays and planning issues• Peer Group and other mental health supports• Protection of Emergency facilities
Businesses	
Businesses that lost trade, are suffering from cash flow issues, or may be forced to close.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants and other assistance to rebuild businesses and/or mitigate short term cash flow issues• Advice on how to broaden and diversify businesses• Recognition that some donations might further adversely affect some businesses• Access to replacement equipment• Advice on schemes such as Job Seeker and small business grants• Advice on setting up on-line shops and other internet-based services• Campaigns such as 'Empty Esky' and 'Click for Vic'.• Short term loans and other financing• Assistance to hire apprentices and other staff• Training schemes• Advice on, and assistance with, marketing
Businesses that depend on other businesses which were damaged during the bushfires.	
Businesses that rely on skills and trades which may be in short supply due to high demand and/or lack of housing.	
Clubs and Interest Groups	
Clubs and Interest Groups which lost or suffered damage to buildings, grounds and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of grant and other funding programs• Grant writing and other assistance including engineering and project management.• Assistance to deal with the paperwork associated with grant agreements.
Clubs and Interest Groups looking to fire and future proof their assets	

Figure 48: Community Members Impacted by the Bushfires

Our Bushfire Recovery Delivery Partners

Our bushfire recovery delivery partners comprise government agencies and non-government organisations as well as local associations representing interest groups, such as the Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association (MDBTA).

Our primary recovery partners are:

- Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV)
- East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC)
- National Bushfire Recovery Association (NBRA).

Bushfire Recovery Delivery Partner - BRV

BRV was established on the 6th of January 2020 as a dedicated and permanent Victorian Government agency working directly with communities to listen, help and deliver what they need after the 2010-20 Eastern Victorian bushfires.

The role of BRV is to coordinate rebuilding and recovery after a disaster in Victoria; partnering with communities, governments, businesses, and not-for-profit organisations to ensure that the short and longer needs of those impacted by the bushfires are met; and that actions taken are both locally driven and locally delivered.

Central to BRV's role is recognition of the importance of community-led recovery.¹⁰⁸ This includes the provision of assistance - such as grant writers – to enable community groups to develop recovery projects and apply for grant funding.

At the local level, BRV has established Bushfire Recovery Hubs to link locals to practical support, planning and rebuilding advice, case support, government and non-profit service providers and small business advice.

Our local Bushfire Recovery Hub – which is also home to MADRA – is in Maurice Ave next to the Post Office. BRV staff members are Katie Symes, James Wallace, and Mike Amos.

Bushfire Recovery Delivery Partner - EGSC

EGSC has the following responsibilities in relation to bushfire recovery:

- Assisting community-led recovery through the employment of Place Managers to build community connections and capacity, share information and knowledge to strengthen community resilience, improve communications and support outcomes between community and council and provide a platform where community members can articulate their needs and advise on how council can support.
- Through the Bushfire Rebuild Support Service, the provision of specialised advice to streamline planning applications and overall rebuilds.
- Developing and implementing the East Gippsland Recovery Plan and sub-plans relating to Culture and Healing, Built Recovery, Natural Recovery, Social Recovery and Economic Recovery.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.vic.gov.au/about-bushfire-recovery-victoria>

- Responding to investigations and inquiries including the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the Inspector General of Emergency Management (IGEM) Fire Season Inquiry.
- Provision of advice on support and services provided by EGSC and other government and non-government agencies.¹⁰⁹

Bushfire Recovery Delivery Partner – National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA)/National Recovery and Resilience Agency (NRRA)

On 6 January 2020, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (was established by Prime Minister Scott Morrison. The Agency leads and coordinates the national response to rebuilding communities affected by the 2019-20 bushfires.¹¹⁰

Based at regional level, the role of NBRA Recovery Support Officers (RSOs) was to provide advice and assistance to individuals and communities on bushfire recovery support. RSOs work with local governments and state agencies to help people understand bushfire recovery assistance that is available. RSOs also provided direct support to individuals, including through assistance in the completion of application forms. State government agencies and local governments retain responsibility for assessing and approving applications and for advising applicants the outcome of their applications.

After the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, the NBRA, together with elements from other government departments, was subsumed into the NRRA. The NRRA combines expertise in natural disaster response, recovery, and resilience, working closely with affected communities and all levels of government and industry. The NRRA is driving efforts to reduce the impact of future disasters through enhanced preparedness.

Other Bushfire Recovery Delivery Partners

Other bushfire recovery delivery partners are listed in the table beneath.

OTHER BUSHFIRE RECOVERY DELIVERY PARTNERS		
Government Departments, Agencies and Contractors		
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)	Parks Victoria	VicRoads
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	Forest Fire Management Victoria	Services Australia (comprising Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support)
East Gippsland Water	Victorian Department of Health	Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Worksafe	GROCON	Workways Australia (Envite)
Reclink		
Health Providers		

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/bushfire>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au/>

OTHER BUSHFIRE RECOVERY DELIVERY PARTNERS		
Gippsland Lakes Complete Health	Gippsland Lakes Community Health	Gippsland Primary Healthcare Network (GPHN)
Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)	Gippsland Women's Health	Relationships Australia - Victoria
Windermere		
Charities		
Red Cross	St Vincent de Paul Society	Save the Children
Salvation Army	Anglicare	Uniting Care
Victorian Council of Churches	Blaze Aid	Disaster Relief Australia
GIVIT		
Utilities Companies		
Telstra	AusNet	NBN Co

Figure 49: Other Bushfire Recovery Delivery Partners

How Can We Assist Our Bushfire Recovery Partners?

Community-led recovery is about communities identifying recovery gaps and proposing solutions based on local knowledge, preferences, priorities, and values. Advocacy is also part of community-led recovery. External agencies need to have insight and understanding of our community needs to provide the right services and programs.

To this end, we can assist recovery agencies through:

- A community endorsed Recovery Plan which provides context and detail around community recovery projects, preferences and priorities.
- A recognition of the funding and personnel constraints of agencies and a willingness to negotiate and compromise if necessary.
- Keeping Ministers and agencies informed of developments and new priorities as recovery projects are funded/implemented.
- Through our advocacy, drawing attention to those aspects of recovery which are not working well either through policy grey areas and/or the perceived imposition of recovery solutions which are incompatible with our preferences and values.

Bushfire Recovery Funding Partners

Our bushfire recovery funding partners are listed in the table beneath.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY FUNDING PARTNERS	
Entity	Assistance
Governments	
Commonwealth, State and local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funding programs (see Chapter Ten – Financing Our Recovery) • Repair and replacement of insured infrastructure

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY FUNDING PARTNERS	
Entity	Assistance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Victorian Bushfire Appeal (in partnership with the Bendigo Bank). Gippsland Community Power Hub (Sustainability Victoria)
Philanthropic Organisations and Charities	
Red Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants Disaster relief payments Community Grant programs
Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)	
Minderoo	
The NewsCorp Bushfire Fund	
GIVIT	
The Salvation Army Bushfire Appeal	
St Vincent de Paul Society	
The Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation	
The East Gippsland Community Foundation	
Individual donors	
	Many people are passionate about our district and have provided financial assistance to help us get back on our feet.

Figure 50: Our Bushfire Recovery Funding Partners

Mallacoota and District Community Groups and Organisations

We are a DIY community with over 65 community groups and organisations. Our service organisations and interest groups are playing an important role in our recovery. The table beneath provides a list of community groups and organisations.

Note: Some organisations fall into more than one category.

MALLACOOTA AND DISTRICT – COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS		
Emergency Services		
Victoria Police (VicPol)	Country Fire Authority (CFA)	State Emergency Service (SES)
Ambulance Victoria (AV)	Coast Guard	Parks Victoria
Red Cross	Surf Lifesaving Club	
Medical and Health Organisations		
Mallacoota Medical Centre	Mallacoota and District Health and Support Service (MDHSS)	Mallacoota Pharmacy
Mallacoota Inlet Aged Care	Community Health Infrastructure and Resilience Fund (CHIRF)	

Business Groups		
Mallacoota District Business and Tourism Association Inc	Mallacoota Community Enterprises Limited (Mallacoota Community Bank®)	Abalone Fishermen's Co-Operative
Religion		
Co-operating Parish of Croajingolong	Inlet Christian Fellowship	
Charities and Charitable Organisations		
The Mallacoota Fundraising Group	Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc	Mallacoota and District Health and Support Service (MDHSS)
Community Health Infrastructure and Resilience Fund (CHIRF)	Mallacoota Recovers	
Service Groups		
Mallacoota Lions Club	The Genoa Hall Committee Inc	Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management Inc (Mallacoota Precinct Management Group)
The Genoa Town Committee	The Genoa Hall Committee	Mallacoota Cemetery Trust
The Gipsy Point Cemetery Trust		
Community Clubs and Interest Groups		
Mallacoota Arts Council	Mallacoota and District Angling Club Inc	Mallacoota Garden Club
Mallacoota Cricket Club (B Grade Premiers)	Mallacoota Pony Club	Mallacoota Board Riders
Mallacoota U3A	Mallacoota Life Saving Club	Mallacoota Golf and Country Club
Mallacoota District Historical Society Inc	Mallacoota Senior Citizens	Mallacoota Sports Club
Mallacoota Soccer Club	Mallacoota Field and Game Association (Gun Club)	Mallacoota Gem Club
Mallacoota Bowling Club	The Genoa Sports Club	Mallacoota Croquet Club
Mallacoota Sea Eagles Dragon Boat Club	Walking Group	Mountain Biking
Mallacoota and District Drama, Arts and Music (MADDAM)	Mallacoota Random Acts	Friendship Sewing Group
Weeding Group	Mallacoota Choir	Mallacoota Inlet Bowling Club
Special Interest Groups		
Friends of Mallacoota	The Sanctuary Youth Group Inc	Mallacoota Progress Association

Mallacoota RSL	Mallacoota Wildlife Shelter	Mallacoota Preschool and Toy Library Inc
Mallacoota Sea Shepherd	Mallacoota Community Op Shop	St Peters Op Shop
Wallagaraugh Wildlife Sanctuary	Gipsy Point Ratepayers Association	3MGB Community Radio
Mallacoota and District Tool Library Inc	Mallacoota and District Collective Leadership	

Figure 51: Mallacoota and District Community Groups and Organisations

Appendix C – Amplifying Statistical Information

Changes to Mallacoota and District State Suburbs (SSC)

Changes to the composition of the Mallacoota and District State Suburbs (SSC) prior to 2016

For the 2011 Census the situation was rather different with the five hinterland SSCs merged into one, labelled Genoa. Also, the Mallacoota SSC was essentially the Locality of Mallacoota covering the built-up area only. There are fewer dwellings (and thus fewer residents) in the area of the current Mallacoota SSC that were not included in the earlier version. The following map is from Table Builder using the 2011 Census dataset.

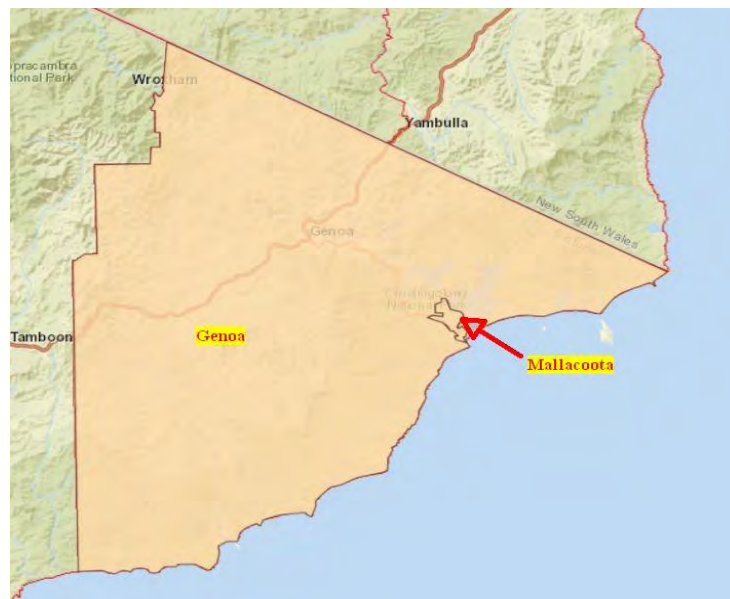


Figure 52: Mallacoota and District ABS 2011 Census

A thumbnail map of the area for 2006, again effectively the Locality rather than the SSC, is included in ABS Quickstats.



Figure 53: Mallacoota and District ABS 2006 Census

Comparison of 10-year Age Group Profiles -Mallacoota and District/Victoria

The following two charts compare the 10-year age group profiles of males and females for Mallacoota and District with those for Victoria. The emphasis on the older groups in our district is obvious for both sexes.

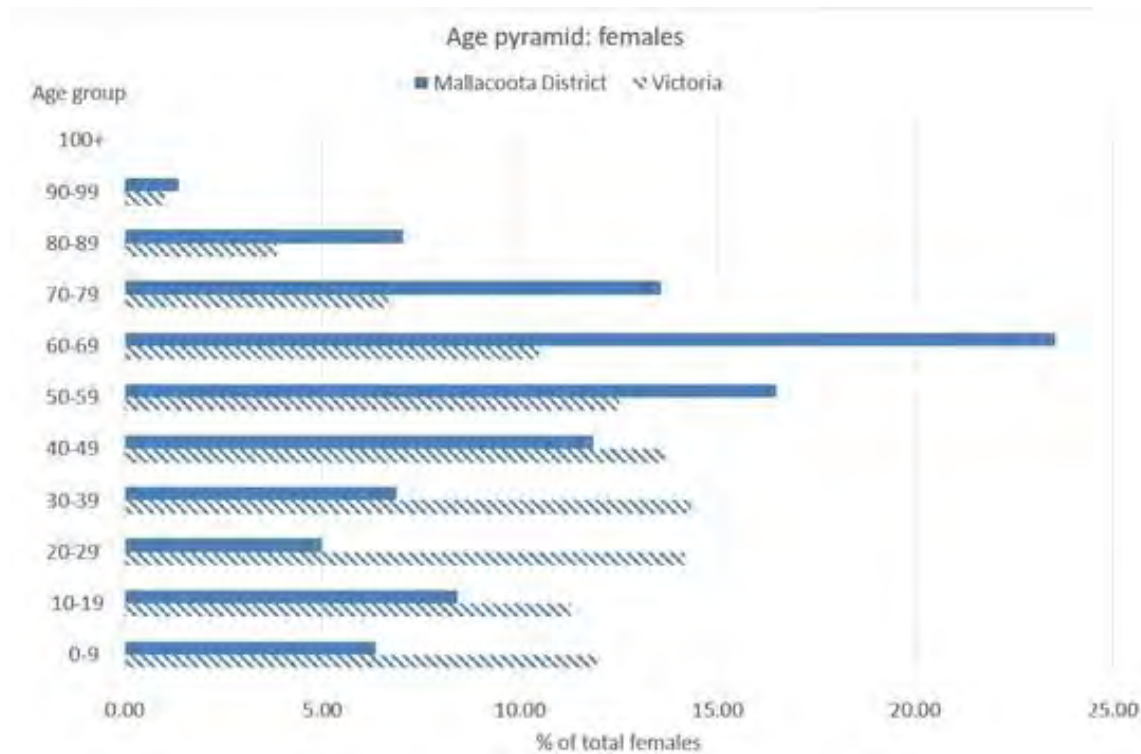


Figure 54: 10-year Age Group Profiles- Mallacoota and District and Victoria - Females

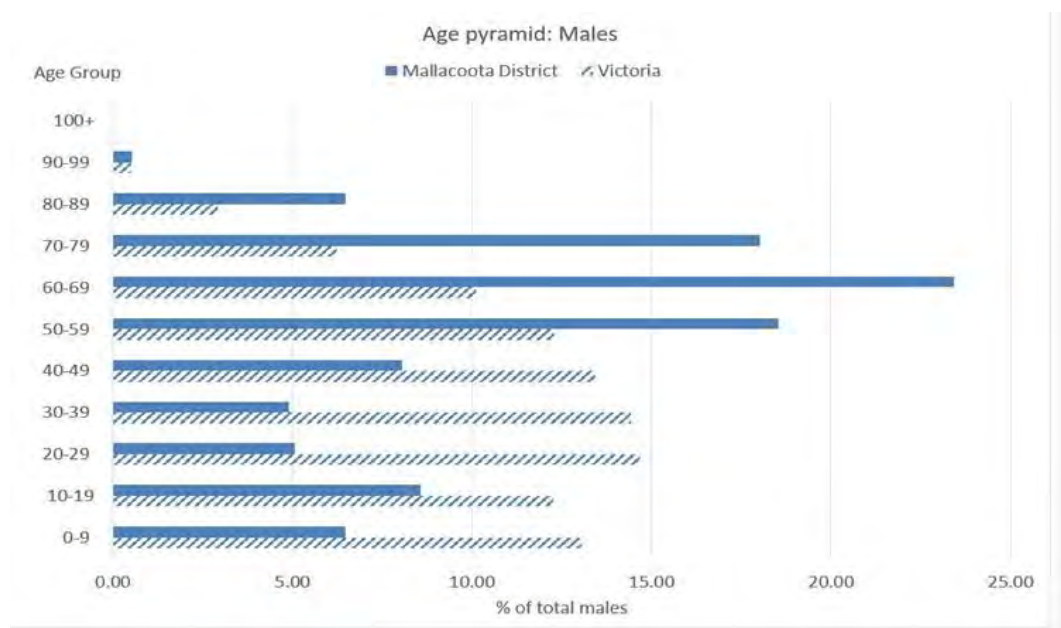


Figure 55: 10-year Age Group Profiles - Mallacoota and District - Males

The Relationship between Age and Volunteering – Mallacoota/Australia

Of interest is the relationship between age and volunteering. Over 30% of our volunteer workforce is over the age of 60. The graph beneath shows the % of total volunteers in each age group comparing Mallacoota (town) with Australia. The chart clearly shows how the active retired members of the population aged 60-79 years continue contributing to society.

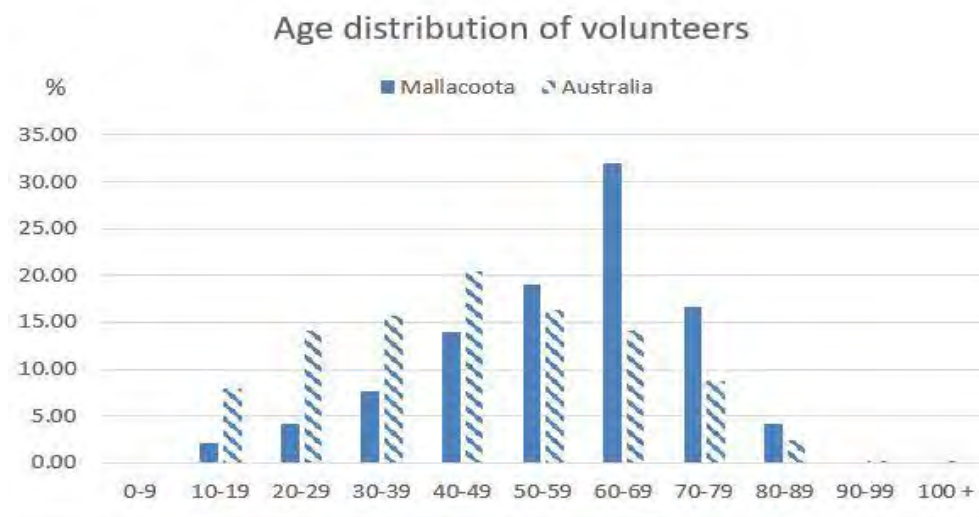


Figure 56: Age Distribution of Volunteers - Mallacoota (Town) Compared with Australia

The next chart depicts the proportion of people in each age group who volunteered.

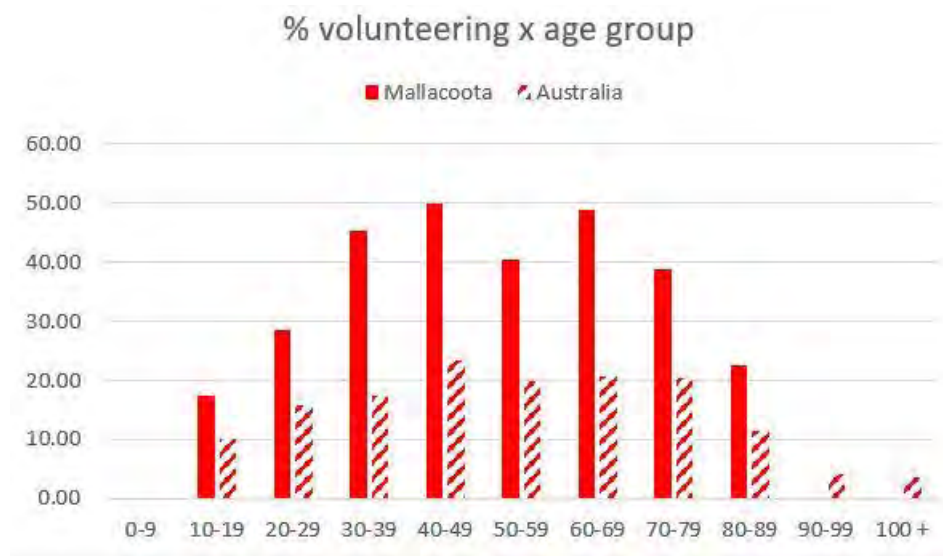


Figure 57: Proportion of Volunteers in Each Age Group - Mallacoota (Town) and Australia

Clearly the people of Mallacoota believe in contributing to their society and doing for ourselves.

Appendix D – April 2020 Snapshot Survey

In April 2020, the Thinking Group conducted a snapshot survey to obtain some initial information about the communities' values, experiences, issues and hopes for the future arising from the 2019-20 bushfires. 66 people responded. The report provides valuable insight to guide our recovery options. We will build on this solid basis as part of our ongoing community consultation.

The following paragraphs are taken from the summary of responses put together by the Thinking Group.

Values

People value the diverse natural landscape, living surrounded by and with easy access to wilderness, ocean and unspoilt areas. They appreciated the small, supportive communities, the people within them and the range of community activities. All of this contributes to a lifestyle where the benefits outweigh the disadvantages associated with living in a remote area.

Impact of the fires

When discussing the impact of the bushfires people described their personal experiences of living through the fire, of being evacuated and unable to return and how the whole experience brought the community together. They also described having lost a home, suffering property damage, having to continue living amid the destroyed houses or being dismayed by the losses suffered by friends and neighbours. The sense of collective trauma and the impact of the loss of town amenities and infrastructure were also mentioned.

Social Environment

People described the impact of the fires on the social environment, the support received, the challenge of having to rebuild homes and lives and a sense of displacement and uncertainty. They raised the importance of maintaining psychosocial well-being and community connections through ongoing mental and physical support. They noted the withdrawal of support agencies and the need for enhanced health and medical services. They also discussed the importance of community get-togethers, restoring a sense of community and working together. The role of education, including support for both students and teachers, and encouraging the work of the youth group were recognised as contributing to community well-being. There was recognition of tensions within the community that will need to be taken into account.

Economic Environment

Funding support, both personal and for businesses, was raised in relation to all levels of government and in relation to the distribution of donations. The need to support the local economy and restore normal business was addressed through suggestions including shopping locally, maximising local employment opportunities, creating new job

opportunities, and encouraging the return of spending visitors. Within this, there is recognition of a need to balance increasing tourism with respect for the needs and wishes of permanent residents. Other suggestions included ways of encouraging greater economic diversity.

Natural Environment

The natural environment was argued to be our greatest asset and attraction, requiring a master plan for environmental development which balances maximising biodiversity and enhancing fire safety. There was recognition of opportunities for community engagement with nature including restoring and extending walking tracks and beach access. Researching/monitoring of regrowth and recovery of native species could include replanting, control/mitigation of erosion, invasive weeds, and feral species. Fuel mitigation planning to reduce fire risk was discussed with suggestions about a variety of ways of achieving effective fuel reduction and firebreaks.

Built Environment

The importance of rebuilding homes, the urgency of clearing of properties and the need for comfortable accommodation for the displaced were all mentioned. There were suggestions for rebuilding to higher standards, rebuilding and extending community infrastructure and recognition of the need for reliable internet services. There was also discussion around examining the big questions and taking time to think things through when looking at rebuilding for the future: to have a proper recovery plan, prioritise projects, develop a strategic tourism plan and evaluate projects. A comprehensive list of longer-term infrastructure proposals was put forward to improve facilities associated with fire and emergency safety, establish independent electricity generation to ensure reliability of supply and increase water storage. Other proposals addressed: community facilities including for fragile aged residents; recreation, exercise and sports facilities and support for education and research.

COVID-19 multiplying the effects of the bushfires

The point was made that the community needs to feel safe, especially given the demographics. We need to find new ways to connect and come together in the face of the Covid-19 restrictions, to identify and implement appropriate communication platforms and plan to return to connectedness once restrictions are eased. The amplifying effect of the Covid-19 restrictions in these post-bushfire communities was acknowledged, especially the economic impact on both individuals and businesses.

Appendix E Mallacoota and District – Voting Priorities

When COVID-19 restrictions eased, we commenced our face-to-face community consultation. As part of this process, we asked people to vote on the suggestions put up by community members for our recovery.

Every project put up for voting received a majority vote... that is, over 50% of community members who voted supported the project. Of the 68 projects put to the vote, 64 received a vote of over 72% and 57 received a vote of over 80%.¹¹¹

The list beneath is the top 25 Recovery projects as voted by our community across the recovery pillars of People and Wellbeing, Buildings and Infrastructure, Business and Economy, and Environment and Biodiversity.¹¹²

These initiatives are in addition to our ongoing core recovery effort and reflect a transition from 'recovery' to 'resilience' as we move towards our Vision of an inclusive, vibrant, strong, and safe community.

Comments from the voting forms beneath each section provide further insight into community concerns and priorities.

For People and Wellbeing:

- Seek support from EGSC and other government agencies to create apprenticeships, training, and work opportunities for our young people.
- A readily available evacuation plan developed by government and community members that factors in key issues such as seasonal populations, evacuation routes, sheltering facilities, jurisdictional boundaries, messaging to communities and risks to safe evacuation.
- Develop a mechanism for ensuring emergency response crews from outside Mallacoota and District are informed about the local community and its features i.e. alternative evacuation routes for flood-prone and fire risk areas and existing local services that can be activated.
- Establish collaborative protocols and partnerships between regional and local emergency services for the Operations and Recovery phases of emergencies.
- For disasters and emergencies, improve continuous communication, early warning, and advice of supports to Mallacoota and District.

Comments in relation to People and Wellbeing centre on volunteerism and aged care.

"We are volunteers – don't commit us too much!" As a community, we can only bite off so much. Just as water finds its own level, the important things will happen, and are already

¹¹¹At the time of writing, we are still awaiting the user-friendly version of the final voting report for publication.

¹¹² As noted earlier, work on the pillar of Aboriginal Healing and Culture is on hold pending opportunities to consult with traditional owners.

happening, thanks to the efforts of many individuals and groups within our community. If a project is the responsibility of an agency, we will advocate for it.

Aged care was an issue before the fires, and we originally considered it 'out of scope' for bushfire recovery. However, as our planning moves from 'recovery to resilience' and aged care is integral to our resilience, we have included it in the Recovery Plan.

Buildings and Infrastructure

- Emergency Diesel Storage
- Conduct an independent fire audit to identify and assess critical infrastructure, risk, emergency resources, and other disaster considerations.
- Review and update Mallacoota and District Planning overlays to incorporate bushfire lessons learned
- Develop and implement a footpath plan for Mallacoota and District.
- In addition to funding for the Genoa-Mallacoota road, road improvements including roads subject to inundation, regular grading, repairs to holes and unstable shoulders and verge clearing.
- Information Boards and signage to replace damaged items.
- Refurbish the Mudbrick Pavilion
- Enhance our recreation spaces and parks.
- Improvements for the WW11 Bunker including stand-alone power, improved BBQ facilities and a display/meeting room.
- Upgrade the Genoa Tennis Shed to a more user-friendly clubroom

Comments include “where’s the swimming pool?” and “didn’t vote for this as it’s the responsibility of government.”

We didn’t ask people to vote on a swimming pool as it is already in the recovery plan. A swimming pool is the thing we are asked most about. We understand Surf Life Saving Victoria is exploring the possibility of a pool in Mallacoota and an update would be well received.

Re government infrastructure initiatives, there is not enough money for everything – hence our advocacy for the projects which have community priority.

Environment and Biodiversity

- Building on the work of existing volunteer groups and agencies, ongoing remedial works including weed removal, coast care, pest control, erosion control and revegetation projects. (Repair)
- An annual review of Fuel Management Action Plans.
- Overseeing the implementation of Fuel Management Action Plans. (Both of these initiatives will need resourcing)

- Seek additional human and other resources for protection and management of our wilderness (ongoing maintenance)
- Support and promote sustainable tourism, in keeping with our natural and community values.

Comments here related to firebreaks and sustainable tourism – the latter, characterised by comments such as “we don’t want tourism to get out of hand”.

Re firebreaks - The Fuel Management Group is working hard on this issue and seeking a balance between maximizing biodiversity and enhancing fire safety. Reviewing and implementing fuel management plans will require resourcing.

Community members recognized the need to broaden and diversify our economy, including sustainable tourism initiatives. Our values-based approach means tourism initiatives must be in keeping with our desire to protect our pristine environment.

Business and Economy

- Encourage greater participation in the local Artisans and Produce market.
- Support for, and establishment of social enterprises. Social enterprises are businesses that trade intentionally to tackle social problems, provide access to employment and training, or help the environment.
- An environmental studies program including information about local flora and fauna, guided bush walks and field days.
- Events with a local or topical theme. Ideas include a film festival featuring local productions and an annual Forest Management conference.
- Land management industry certification and training together with local employment in land management projects.

The comments on Business and Economy projects did not have any recurring themes, however, the projects voted for in this category reveal an emerging theme across the pillars – that is, combining training and employment opportunities with environmental protection, remediation, and ongoing management.

Appendix F – PEST Analysis

PEST is an acronym that stands for political, economic, social, and technological. A PEST analysis looks at ways in which external forces can impact an organisation or community now and in the future.

The following analysis is not intended to be exhaustive, but sufficient to give insight to shape our recovery strategies.

Political Outlook

The political climate in Australia has been so volatile in recent years making a prediction as to its future direction is fraught with danger. The deciding factor will likely be how Australia recovers post bushfires/COVID-19 in terms of social and economic confidence.

To this end, our State and Federal Governments have some time to engineer recovery solutions. The next State election is not due until 26th November 2022 and the next Federal election will take place in or before 2022. We live in 'safe' Nationals seats at both the State and Federal level. Both our Federal and State electorates are broad and not necessarily indicative of local political preferences.

Our local council election has just taken place. Nine councillors have been elected of which three are previous Mayors.

We regularly engage with our local Members (Federal and State) and Ministers with portfolio responsibilities applicable to our recovery to seek their support and advice and, as projects are funded and/or implemented, to update our recovery priorities.

We met with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in January 2021. During the meeting, they reiterated EGSC's support and ongoing commitment to our bushfire recovery.

Economic Outlook

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the Australian economy. Social distancing measures and lockdowns caused damage to consumer and business balance sheets and weak expectations will likely mean consumption and investment will pick up slowly even after restrictions are lifted.

Australia has just emerged from a brief period of recession, the first in 29 years. A recession is defined as 'a period of temporary economic decline during which trade and industrial activity are reduced, generally identified by a fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in two successive quarters.'¹¹³

The 'trickle down' effect of a recession is a reduction in spending by ordinary people. We are less likely to spend money on luxury and big-ticket items. One way to slow down the

¹¹³https://www.google.com.au/search?source=hp&ei=0UdHX9ndCI_grQH5IraQDw&q=what+is+a+recession&og=what+is+a+recession&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQDFAAWABgigpoAHAAeACAAQCIQAQCSAQCYAQCAQdnd3Mtd2l6&scient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwiZity81rrrAhUPcCsKHXmLDfIQ4dUDCA0

effects of a recession in small communities is to support local businesses and individuals. Australians spending money in the community is seen as slowing down the decline.¹¹⁴

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) Governor is warning recovery from the recession is likely to be “uneven and drawn out”.¹¹⁵ While economic indicators are positive, some parts of the economy remain in difficulty. The Reserve Bank ¹¹⁶ predicts:

- Potentially adverse changes to the labour market, workers may need to take jobs that are poor matches for their skills.
- Potential structural changes to the economy to adopt to post-outbreak realities.
- Lower investment and poor skill matching could see the economy’s productive potential damaged.
- A slower recovery in economic activity would be consistent with inflation remaining low for longer
- Lower wages growth through reduction of hours worked and number of employees and/or wages freezes and/or cuts to hourly wages.
- An increase in the number of long-term unemployed or structural unemployment in the economy if people are not matched to jobs during the recovery phase.

Analysis by McKinsey¹¹⁷ offers three categories and six forces shaping economic shock: COVID-19 restrictions (number of domestic customers, industry constraints), business cycle effects (spending per person, value of exports, business health) and structural changes (shifts). The first two are temporary, the latter permanent.

The McKinsey report suggests the industries most affected in the short term (COVID-19) space are tourism, arts and recreation services, accommodation and food services, and education and training. The report notes, however, there are variations within each of these sectors.

For example, Australia is a net importer of tourism. Australians spend more overseas on international tourism (around \$45bn) than international tourists bring to Australia (\$40bn). While our national borders remain closed, there is a significant hit to the tourism sector. However, if Australians were to direct their international spending to domestic holidays, the tourist industry is buffered from the loss of international spending. This is not a simple matter of repurposing this expenditure. Australians spend less money and less time on domestic holidays and choose different destinations to foreign tourists. This may be a boon

¹¹⁴ <https://www.9news.com.au/national/australia-recession-explained-in-simple-terms-how-it-affects-ordinary-people/adccfd33-440f-48d3-89ea-238e70242265>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-02/australia-september-quarter-economic-growth-gdp-figures/12934336>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/smp/2020/may/economic-outlook.html>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/the-next-normal-for-australian-industries-and-workforces?cid=eml-web#>

for some tourist towns, such as ours, but of little help to others (such as Sydney and Melbourne).¹¹⁸

The combination of top-down stimulus (such as Job Seeker and nation building projects), revised fiscal and monetary policy settings and bottom-up local initiatives (which take into consideration structural changes to the economy) is potentially powerful in the recovery space.

Closer to home, Deloitte Australia Risk Advisory has provided a pro bono analysis of the results of the Rapid Impact Assessment Survey (RAIS) into the impact of the bushfires on businesses. The RAIS was conducted during April/May 2020.

Survey data has been aggregated at Local Government Area (LGA)¹¹⁹.

13 businesses in Mallacoota and District responded with one survey only partially completed. Due to the small number of respondents, the survey results specific to our district may not represent the views of the Mallacoota and District business community as a whole. Anecdotal evidence suggests businesses did not complete the surveys as the timing was not good and there was insufficient context around survey context and purpose.

Business impacts include:

- COVID-19 is having the largest negative impact on businesses, via reduced tourism and business closures.
- While many businesses were running at reduced capacity or closed during the peak of the bushfire crisis, the impact of COVID-19 has been more significant with 83% of respondents closed or operating at reduced capacity.
- Respondents note the double impact of financial losses due to bushfire and COVID-19 crises. On average businesses reported losses totalling 11.3% of annual income.
- Retail trade businesses reported the highest overall financial loss related to both the bushfires and COVID-19 crises. The pattern of loss varies depending on the sector.
- Reported losses for larger centres are lower than for more regional areas likely due to fewer and more variable responses influencing the average values.
- Respondents noted staff reductions across all categories of employment with casual staff being the most impacted. On average businesses report 25-30% reduction in staff.

Outlook predictions include:

- Most respondents projected returning to normal operations within 12 months though there remains ongoing uncertainty. Loss of tourism, ongoing business closure and reduced revenue were the most cited ongoing impacts.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/the-next-normal-for-australian-industries-and-workforces?cid=eml-web>

¹¹⁹ 2020 Deloitte Risk Advisory Pty Ltd

¹²⁰ Ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19 and fears about it reaching our district are causing further uncertainty and fear from both social and economic perspectives.

- Respondents noted they were more confident of still being in operation over the longer term, but many are less certain in the shorter term of 1-3 months. Half the respondents have either deferred or cancelled investments in their business.

The following observations were made in relation to recovery support:

- Rent/rate relief was rated at the most helpful form of assistance followed by help and advice on the support options available and making applications.¹²¹
- Many respondents are still uncertain about support options. Bushfire recovery and Federal government support via Job Keeper were among the most commonly accessed services among the respondents.

Environmental Outlook

Our environment is not static. During our lifetime, there have been significant changes to our geography, flora, fauna and climate; some due to evolution and others because of human action.

If we are to devise effective strategies for bushfire recovery, prevention and mediation; we need to understand the impact of our changing climate. The following analysis is taken from the Australian Government's websites pertaining to climate change.¹²²

The Australian Government has grouped geographical regions into super cluster, clusters and sub-clusters for the purpose of climate projections. Mallacoota and District falls within the Southern Slopes (Victoria East) sub-cluster.

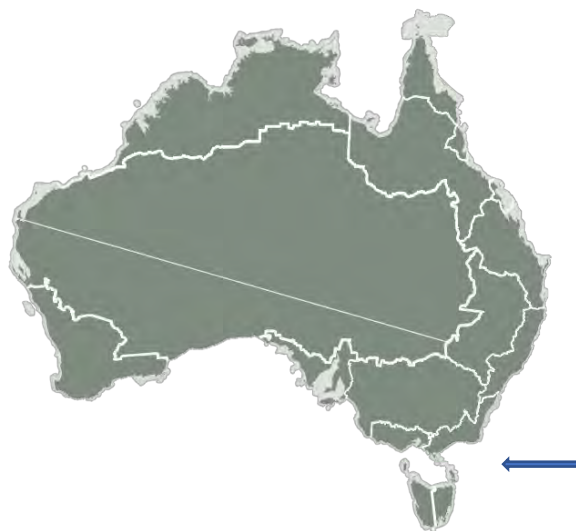


Figure 58: Southern Slopes Sub-cluster

¹²¹ Rental relief and the availability of rental properties in our district continues to be of concern following the end of the COVID-19 moratorium on rent ceilings and evictions.

¹²² https://www.google.com.au/search?q=southern+slopes+Victoria+East+sub+cluster+diagram&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj-xMDN_rzrAhWFb30KHcCzDyIQ_AUoAXoECAwQAw&biw=1074&bih=1226#imgsrc=-SjZb4KjJCyHyM

The Southern Slopes sub-cluster is within the ‘midlatitudes’ of the global climate system, falling between the subtropical ridge of high pressure (at about 30 °S) and the so-called ‘Roaring Forties’ (at 40-50 °S). The region receives rainfall from a variety of weather systems, including cold fronts and troughs coming from the west as well as cut-off lows.¹²³

Key messages are:

- Average temperatures will continue to increase in all seasons (*very high confidence*)
- More hot days and warm spells are projected with *very high confidence*. Fewer frosts are projected with *high confidence*.
- Generally, less rainfall in the cool season is projected with *high confidence*. Changes to summer and autumn rainfall are possible but less clear. For the near future, natural variability is projected to dominate any projected changes.
- Increased intensity of extreme rainfall events is projected, with *high confidence*.
- Mean sea level will continue to rise, and height of extreme sea-level events will also increase.
- **A harsher fire-weather climate in the future (*high confidence*)**
- On annual and decadal basis, natural variability in the climate system can act to either mask or enhance any long term human induced trend, particularly in the next 20 years and for rainfall.

A changing climate will not only impact our natural assets (flora and fauna) but will impact urban planning and rebuilding. We must take into consideration the increased potential for extreme events in the future.¹²⁴ The implications of not taking climate change into consideration could include:

- Some areas may be designated ‘at risk’ precluding future development.
- Significant rises in insurance premiums for existing homes in ‘at risk’ areas.
- Houses in designated ‘red zones’ could be designated uninsurable.
- Laws preventing the sale of properties that cannot be insured.

In a paper published in Nature Urban Sustainability, researchers outlined a set of guiding principles that rebuilding and redevelopment must be based on. These are

- retreating from at-risk areas, and rebuilding in communities, rather than in isolated, scattered housing,
- creating more localised energy systems, such as renewables with local battery storage, which can reduce the risk of communities being cut off from power during extreme weather events,
- incorporating Indigenous knowledge of seasonal burning and engaging communities in ecologically oriented fire management,

¹²³ A cut-off low is a low-pressure system that develops south of South Africa, stemming from the main westerly trough systems of cold air. As the cut-off low develops, it deepens into a defined closed system that extends to the surface and which becomes displaced equator-ward of the main westerly flow.

¹²⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2021-02-24/tree-change-dream-over-resilient-communities-rebuild/13163800>

- reducing energy consumption of communities through electrified public transport infrastructure, and localised services and amenities that can eliminate the need for regular long-distance travel, and
- adopting passive cooling techniques in architecture, and outdoor spaces to reduce reliance on energy-intensive cooling.^{125 126}

Social Outlook

The post bushfire social outlook is intrinsically linked to COVID-19 and how the world will look when the pandemic passes. There will likely be a 'new normal' characterised by changes in how we work, play and connect.

Working from home (WFH) is becoming an accepted way of life. Evidence suggests that in some industries WFH is just as productive as traditional workplaces. As part of this shift, we are seeing the rise of the village as people spend more time in their home settings and less time in major city central business districts.

A likely flow-on effect from WFH is decentralisation as people may no longer need to live near a major city to work.¹²⁷ There may be changes to the housing market as regional areas start to look more attractive and affordable.¹²⁸ The importance of infrastructure such as the NBN has been highlighted but there will also be calls for other types of infrastructure to meet a new demography.

The nature of work will likely change. During the COVID-19 pandemic as people have lost jobs there has been a massive increase in start-up businesses. In July 2020, 50,000 start-ups were registered, up more than 30% at the same time in 2019.¹²⁹ The start-ups include cottage industries, online businesses, consulting, and education.

If the right support is given, social enterprises could also provide employment pathways for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged people who have fallen out of the workforce.¹³⁰ Social enterprises are:

‘..businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide people access to employment and training, or help the environment. Using the power of the marketplace to solve the most pressing societal problems, social enterprises

¹²⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2021-02-24/tree-change-dream-over-resilient-communities-rebuild/13163800>

¹²⁶ Norman, B., Newman, P. & Steffen, W. Apocalypse now: Australian bushfires and the future of urban settlements. *npj Urban Sustain* 1, 2 (2021).

¹²⁷ Jim Bright 30th August 2020

¹²⁸ The flow on effects of a post disaster shift from cities to regions for the real estate values in our district are difficult to quantify given current housing shortfalls as a result of 123 homes being lost during the bushfires.

¹²⁹ <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/watch/surge-in-new-business-registrations-across-australia/vp-BB18tvLc>

¹³⁰ <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2020/04/social-enterprise-has-a-unique-role-in-the-covid-19-challenge/>

are commercially viable businesses existing to benefit the public and the community, rather than shareholders and owners.’¹³¹

Consumer behaviours will change because of economic uncertainty, the long-term impacts of unemployment¹³² and, potentially, increased mindfulness around sustainable consumption. Discretionary expenditure on items such as travel, tourism, hospitality, and entertainment will fall or be replaced by different choices.

There will be ongoing mental health issues based on fear of the world no longer being a safe place and post-traumatic stress arising from bush fire trauma compounded by COVID-19 imposed restrictions. On a positive note, shared experiences of stress can often bring communities together.¹³³

New societal inequalities are emerging with socially disadvantaged groups hit disproportionately harder as COVID-19 forces choices around staying home or going to work to put food on the table.

The wealth gap between young and old will widen as our youth face significant educational and employment challenges. World-wide, more than 1.6 billion young people are not attending school. Educational inequalities will lead to disadvantage in the labour markets and further exacerbate inequalities.¹³⁴ Add to the mix social restrictions, such as being unable to celebrate rites of passage, and the potential for long term mental health issues and social unrest is high.

Technological Outlook

The bushfires and COVID-19 have highlighted the importance of connectivity; in particular, ubiquitous high-bandwidth technology such as 5G. Connectivity trends that can expect to continue in some form include:¹³⁵

- A massive global shift to remote working including video conferencing, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) training.
- Replacement of classroom learning with remote schooling including virtual classrooms, AR and VR education content.
- Substitution of online socialisation for in-person gatherings including group video chats, online gaming and virtual exercise classes.
- Shifts in commerce and retail in response to sudden changes in consumer behaviour including online stores and smart warehouses.
- Public health crisis response including artificial intelligence for public health, telehealth, connected hospitals and connected transport/drones.

¹³¹ <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise/what-is-a-social-enterprise/social-enterprise-definition/>

¹³² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/what-risks-does-covid-19-pose-to-society-in-the-long-term/>

¹³³ <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/after-covid-19-what-will-normal-life-be-like/>

¹³⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/what-risks-does-covid-19-pose-to-society-in-the-long-term/>

¹³⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Accelerator_Program_5G_Outlook_Report_2020.pdf

The roll-out of 5G is taking place across Australia albeit slowly and is not expected in our district for several years.

The Gippsland Regional Partnership is one of nine partnerships across Victoria, established by the Victorian Government, recognising local communities are in the best position to understand the challenges faced by their region.¹³⁶ Partner organisations include the Committee for Gippsland, Regional Development Australia Gippsland and the Gippsland Local Government Network.¹³⁷ These groups have collaborated to produce the Regional Digital Plan for Gippsland. The plan acknowledges the importance of digital connectivity to people's lives and that many communities are disadvantaged when it comes to accessing digital infrastructure and services.

The plan (last updated in August 2019) identifies a series of priorities for addressing Gippsland's digital connectivity gaps. Priorities centre on:

- addressing mobile blackspots,
- better services for remote and vulnerable communities,
- influencing stronger NBN and successor technologies for business-grade services,
- facilitating digital literacy training, and
- enhancing connectivity in tourist hotspots.

Shortfalls for East Gippsland are seen as:

- a shortage of skilled technology professionals,
- lack of general digital proficiency,
- lack of access to technology skills training,
- poor mobile phone coverage and reliability, and
- no or inadequate public WiFi in small towns.

The findings and priority actions detailed in Gippsland Digital Plan will form the basis of the Regional Partnership's advocacy to the Commonwealth, Victorian and local governments, as well as industry and community groups in developing the future digital landscape of Gippsland.

There is work already happening in this space. Telstra is participating in the Victorian Government – Digital Connectivity Service Program (ITP) and the Commonwealth Regional Connectivity Program (RCP). We have provided letters of support for Telstra's plans to update our telecommunication network with mobile coverage and for a new mobile tower to provide coverage. This will have the effect of reducing communication black spots.

In other technological developments, new bushfire fighting technology is being devised to better defend people and communities including:

¹³⁶ <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/gippsland#:~:text=The%20Gippsland%20Regional%20Partnership%20is,opportunities%20faced%20by%20their%20region.>

¹³⁷ https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1872946/Gippsland-Digital-Plan-Final-25-September.pdf

- Virtual reality and haptic (3D touch) technology to train firefighters, reducing their exposure to toxic perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS).
- Improvements to keep firefighters safe from truck burnovers.
- Use of drones to locate property damage and hotspots and to drop small spheres of potassium permanganate 'dragon eggs' which burst into flame on hitting the ground to create firebreaks.
- Using satellite and space cameras to monitor bushfires from orbit and provide firefighters with mapping information.
- Using sound waves to extinguish blazes, negating the use of water or chemicals.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ <https://www.createdigital.org.au/5-ways-technology-change-way-fight-bushfires/#:~:text=The%20technology%2C%20called%20DEIS%2C%20or%20DLR%20Earth%20Sensing,Meteorology%E2%80%99s%20rainfall%20data%20in%20its%20level%20of%20detail.>

Appendix G – Progress Report

This appendix is a dynamic progress report of recovery projects and activities.

The first section of this appendix records MADRA's activities in our role as a voice for our community in matters of bushfire recovery. This includes our advocacy on critical recovery issues and letters of support for community projects.

The second section of this appendix details the status of the recovery projects which are underway. This section is also intended as a record of the projects which have been funded and/or implemented.

Advocacy

As a voice for our community, we 'stick up' for individuals, organisations and our community in matters which do not fit neatly within policy guidelines, are not taking place in a timely manner causing distress or do not align with our community values and preferences.

The table beneath provides a summary of our advocacy efforts.

MADRA COMMUNITY ADVOCACY			
Ref	Issue	To	Date
1	Replacement Kindergarten – Community Consultation	Department of Education and Training (DET)	19 June 2020
2	Replacement Kindergarten – Community Consultation	BRV	19 June 2020
3	Topsoil, our Top Four, Grant Writing and Other Support, Housing Rental Crisis, CRC Budget, Grants Auspices	CEO BRV	29 June 2020
4	Urgent Support for the Hub	BRV (by email)	10 July 2020
5	Mallacoota Pre School – Community Consultation	BRV	18 July 2020
6	Employment	CEO EGSC	29 July 2020
7	Mallacoota Pre School	Mallacoota Pre School Association	29 July 2020
8	Priority Projects (Pending Community Consultation)	Darren Chester	22 August 2020
9	Roads Upgrades	Darren Chester	30 August 2020
10	Emergency Management Planning and Education	Mallacoota Police	8 September 2020
11	Emergency Management Planning and Education	Mallacoota CFA	8 September 2020
12	Emergency Management Planning and Education	Mallacoota SES	8 September 2020
13	Emergency Management Planning and Education	Red Cross	8 September 2020

MADRA COMMUNITY ADVOCACY			
Ref	Issue	To	Date
14	Emergency Management Planning and Education	Halls and Rec Committee	8 September 2020
15	Emergency Management Planning and Education	EGSC	8 September 2020
16	Housing Shortfall	BRV	16 September 2020
17	Housing Shortfall	EGSC	16 September 2020
18	Housing Shortfall	DHS	16 September 2020
19	Thinking Big as Part of the Disaster Recovery Process	Darren Chester	26 September 2020
20	Debriefing for Emergency Services Volunteers	Red Cross	1 October 2020
21	Replacement Lakes Infrastructure	Parks Victoria	4 October 2020
22	Request for Media Advisor	CEO BRV	7 October 2020
23	Gipsy Point Base Station	Telstra Regional Engagement Manager	15 October 2020
24	Telstra 4G Upgrade Mallacoota and District	Telstra Regional Engagement Manager	29 October 2020
25	Emergency Preparedness	CEO EGSC	18 November 2020
26	Betka Beach Seawall Replacement	DELWP	20 November 2020
27	Skate Park Grant Application (on behalf of Halls and Rec)	Executive Officer, Bushfire Recovery Appeal	8 December 2020
28	Funding Opportunities	News Corp	14 December 2020
29	Welcome to our Community Visitor Guide	Visitors	15 December 2020
30	Community Support and Cue Cards	Community Members	15 December 2020
31	Mobile Internet	CEO Telstra	10 January 2021
32	NBN Delivery to Mallacoota	NBN Co	20 January 2021
33	Updated Priority Projects (Next Cabs Off the Rank...)	Lisa Neville MP	20 January 2021
34	Updated Priority Projects (Next Cabs Off the Rank...)	Darren Chester MP	20 January 2021
35	Updated Priority Projects (Next Cabs Off the Rank...)	Tim Bull MP	20 January 2021

MADRA COMMUNITY ADVOCACY			
Ref	Issue	To	Date
36	Updated Priority Projects (Next Cabs Off the Rank...)	Mayor EGSC	20 January 2021
37	Updated Priority Projects (Next Cabs Off the Rank...)	CEO BRV	20 January 2021
38	Updated Priority Projects (Next Cabs Off the Rank...)	CEO EGSC	20 January 2021
39	A Digital Hub for Mallacoota	EGSC	22 January 2021
40	Tool Library Auspice	MDHSS Board President	25 January 2021
41	Water Rates Relief	East Gippsland Water Authority; BRV	8 February 2021
42	Digital Hub Advice and Support	Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy	8 February 2021
43	Digital Hub Advice and Support	Minister for Government Services	8 February 2021
44	Digital Hub Advice and Support	Parliamentary Secretary for Creative Industries	8 February 2021
45	Fuel Management/Burned Trees	CEO EGSC	24 February 2021
46	Combined Emergency Services Facility	Minister for Police and Emergency Services	25 February 2021
47	Emergency Preparedness	Mallacoota CFA	10 March 2021
48	AusNet Power Back Up	AusNet (email)	24 March 2021
49	Industrial Land Supply Assessment	EGSC (emails)	26 March 2021
50	HMAS CHOULES Visit – PTSD concerns	CEO EGSC	9 April 2021
51	Mallacoota Kindergarten – Community Concerns	CEO BRV	15 April 2021
52	Combined Emergency Services Facility	BRV – Megan Stiffler (by email)	22 April 2021
53	Housing Shortfall	CEO BRV	22 April 2021
54	Housing Shortfall	Penny Fowler HWT (by email)	27 April 2021
55	Housing Shortfall	Andrew Forrest Minderoo (by phone)	26 April 2021
56	NBN Advocacy for an individual	NBN Co	29 April 2021
57	Complex site issues/individual advocacy	BRV Regional Director	7 May 2021
58	Keeping Community Informed	Parks Victoria	12 May 2021
59	Funding Priorities from Community Consultation	CEO BRV	24 June 2021
60	Funding Priorities from Community Consultation	CEO EGSC	24 June 2021

MADRA COMMUNITY ADVOCACY			
Ref	Issue	To	Date
61	Assistance with Grant Funding – GST	CEO BRV	30 June 2021
62	Housing Assistance	Chair, Clifton Creek CRC (email)	1 July 2021
63	Auspice issues	CEOs BRV and EGSC	28 July 2021
64	Telecommunications – Mobile Internet	CEO EGSC	4 August 2021
65	Auspice Issues/Mobile Internet	Darren Chester MP	4 August 2021
66	Auspice Issues/Mobile Internet	Tim Bull MP	4 August 2021
67	Auspice Issues/Mobile Internet	Cr Mendy Urie, EGSC Mayor	4 August 2021
68	HWT Charitable Donation	Email to the Chair of HWT	4 August 2021
69	Housing – Rental Crisis	Emails and meetings	August 2021
70	Taking Community Recovery Projects Forward – top 25	Meeting with EGSC/BRV	13 August 2021
71	Grant writing and project management assistance	BRV	24 August 2021
72	Request for water testing (for Covid)	Dept of Health	1 September 2021
73	Follow-up re possible project assistance	Penny Fowler, HWT	7 September 2021
74	Parks Victoria new positions and ongoing need for employment and fuel management	Darren Chester MP	10 September 2021
75	Parks Victoria new positions and ongoing need for employment and fuel management	Tim Bull MP	10 September 2021
76	Distribution of advice for tenants	BRV	22 September 2021
77	Housing shortage: Urgent need for temporary accommodation	EGSC CEO	6 October 2021
78	Housing shortage: Potential temporary accommodation	Minderoo Foundation	15 October 2021
79	Recovery Plan and potential projects	Stephanie Paglia, NewsCorp Australia	28 October 2021
80	Housing shortage: Potential supply of Minderoo Pods	EGSC CEO	3 November 2021
81	Fuel management	DELWP	3 November 2021
82	Fuel management	Parks Victoria	3 November 2021
83	Genoa River & Gravelly Point jetties	Parks Victoria	5 November 2021
84	Delayed delivery dates for Gipsy Point mobile tower installation	BRV	16 November 2021
85	Delayed delivery dates for Gipsy Point mobile tower installation	EGSC	16 November 2021

MADRA COMMUNITY ADVOCACY			
Ref	Issue	To	Date
86	Delayed delivery dates for Gipsy Point mobile tower installation	Darren Chester MP	16 November 2021
87	Delayed delivery dates for Gipsy Point mobile tower installation	Tim Bull MP	16 November 2021
88	Potential housing plan and grant application	Judy Moore, East Gippsland Building Permits	24 November 2021
89	Victoria Police properties and housing shortage issues	Victoria Police	7 December 2021
90	Delayed announcements, short timeframes, and poor timing of grant rounds	BRV CEO	9 December 2021
91	Delayed announcements, short timeframes, and poor timing of grant rounds	EGSC	9 December 2021
92	Delayed announcements, short timeframes, and poor timing of grant rounds	Darren Chester MP	9 December 2021
93	Delayed announcements, short timeframes, and poor timing of grant rounds	Tim Bull MP	9 December 2021
94	Outline of issues contributing to housing crisis	The Hon Richard Wynne, Minister for Housing	14 December 2021
95	Road issues and upgrade	Darren Chester MP	12 January 2022
96	Housing crisis and Council regulations	EGSC CEO	14 January 2022
97	Update on housing crisis and need for social housing	Governor General - The Hon David Hurley	17 January 2022
98	Housing crisis and need for social housing	Community Equity Housing Ltd	18 January 2022
99	Housing crisis and need for social housing	East Coast Housing Ltd	18 January 2022
100	Housing crisis and need for social housing	Community Housing (Vic) Ltd	18 January 2022
101	The future of the Hub	BRV	22 March 2022
102	The future of the Hub	EGSC	22 March 2022
103	Emails discussing potential assistance from St Vincent de Paul society	(emails) St Vincent de Paul	April 2022
104	Land for social housing and planning regulation impediments	The Hon Richard Wynne, Minister for Housing	3 May 2022
105	Questions about the future of the Hub	CEO, BRV	24 May 2022
106	Request for help with rebuilding issues and difficulties	Darren Chester MP, Tim Bull MP	30 May 2022
107	Fuel management concerns in Genoa and District	Commissioner Andrew Crisp, EMV	31 May 2022

Figure 59: MADRA Community Advocacy

Letters of Support

Government funding bodies indicated a letter of support from MADRA will strengthen bushfire recovery project funding applications from community groups as MADRA support indicates broad community endorsement of projects. We have provided letters of support for the organisations and/or projects as detailed in the table beneath.

MADRA LETTERS OF SUPPORT			
Ref	Organisation	Description	Date
1	Padma Newsome & Susannah Keebler	REGENERATE: Mallacoota to Marabá Arts Project	16 June 2020
2	Yarn by the Sea	Grant Application	11 August 2020
3	Mallacoota RSL	Dark Skies Project	13 August 2020
4	Mallacoota Abalone Limited	LER Funding Application	25 August 2020
5	Mallacoota Pony Club	LER Funding Application	5 October 2020
6	Bushfire Recovery Hub	Guitar purchase	2 November 2020
7	Mallacoota Halls and Rec Committee	3MGB Narrow Casting	5 November 2020
8	Genoa Sports Club	Tennis Courts Grant Funding Application	12 November 2020
9	Skate Park	Bushfire Recovery Appeal Grant Application	13 November 2020
10	Envite	LER Funding Application	19 November 2020
11	EGSC	Weed control project	24 November 2020
12	Mallacoota Dragon Boat Club	One Good Community Bushfire Grant	28 January 2021
13	Katie Symes/Mallacoota District	Music Victoria Regional Development Program	14 February 2021
14	Mallacoota Field and Game Club	Support for grant applications	15 February 2021
15	CHIRF	Youth and Social Outreach for Bushfire Impacted Communities Tender with Gippsland PHN	18 February 2021
16	Mallacoota & District Historical Society	FRRR grant for Native Bush Walk	22 February 2021
17	CHIRF	Building Better Regions Fund Infrastructure Grant Round 5 for Stage 2 of the Medical Centre - Recovery and Wellbeing Centre.	10 March 2021
18	Gippsland Agriculture Group	Gippsland Agriculture Centre	7 April 2021
19	Mallacoota Coast Guard	LER Funding Application ¹³⁹	8 April 2021
20	EGSC/Halls and Rec	Main Hall Refurbishment	9 April 2021

¹³⁹ E40RC (State Budget) funding provided in lieu

MADRA LETTERS OF SUPPORT			
Ref	Organisation	Description	Date
21	Mallacoota Golf Club	LER Funding Application	9 April 2021
22	Mallacoota Pony Club	Bushfire Recovery Grant Application	9 April 2021
23	Connect Well	Food Van Feast	31 May 2021
24	Mallacoota Preschool	Food Van Feast	31 May 2021
25	The MacKillop Foundation	Stormbirds and Seasons for Growth Programs	15 June 2021
26	Reclink Australia	Extending funding for local Reclink team	29 July 2021
27	Yolande Oakley/Don Ashby	Book of poetry and poems tracing bushfires and recovery	30 July 2021
28	Mallacoota & District Historical Society	Stand Alone Power (Black Saturday grants)	9 August 2021
29	Genoa Town Committee	Genoa History Park (Black Summer grants)	12 August 2021
30	Mallacoota Tool Library	Black Summer Grants application	17 August 2021
31	Wilderness Workspace	Black Summer Grants application	17 August 2021
32	MAPA Pearls	Bushfire Recovery Grant application	15 September 2021
33	Music Victoria, Coota Gathers and others	Funding submission for 'Social and Economic Recovery through Music in the Far East' project.	30 September 2021
34	Mallacoota Halls and Rec Committee	Refurbishment of the Mallacoota Mudbrick Pavilion	30 September 2021
35	Mallacoota Halls and Rec Committee	Generators for the Mud Brick Pavilion, Main Hall and the Community Club Rooms	23 November 2021
36	Padma Newsome	Grant application for Ashes to Music program	24 November 2021
37	Coota Gathers	Coota Gathers Event	14 December 2021
38	Royal Flying Doctor Service	Grant application for RFDS Victoria for providing Primary Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Stepped Care Services	16 December 2021
39	Wilderness Workspace	Grant application for Enterprise Connect Facilitator for Wilderness Workspace	21 December 2021
40	Fuel Management Group	Bushfire Preparedness and Information Booklet	1 February 2022
41	MSEG / DELWP / Ausnet	Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy program	16 March 2022

MADRA LETTERS OF SUPPORT			
Ref	Organisation	Description	Date
42	Wilderness Workspace	Local Economic Recovery Program Grant Application	30 March 2022
43	Genoa Hall Committee	Genoa Hall - East Gippsland Community Foundation grant application	31 March 2022
44	3MGB/Mallacoota Events	Application for outside broadcast and mobile recording studio	31 March 2022
45	Genoa Town Committee	Genoa History Park - Local Economic Recovery Program grant application	4 April 2022
46	Save the Children Australia	LER and East Gippsland Community Foundation applications for Recovery and Resilience Building for Children with Additional Needs	5 April 2022
47	Australian Business Volunteers	Local Economic Recovery Program grant application	6 April 2022
48	Mallacoota Sea Eagles Dragon Boat Club	East Gippsland Community Foundation grant application	6 April 2022

Figure 60: MADRA Letters of Support

Bushfire Recovery Pillars – Bushfire Recovery Project Status

People and Wellbeing

PEOPLE AND WELLBEING PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Support and Advice	
<p>We are seeking ongoing support and advice as community deals with the aftermath of the bushfires. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological, social work, case management and drug and alcohol expertise • Vocational/Tafe outreach service • Cultural support for Aboriginal communities (inclusive of Cann River) • A Family Violence Support person • Financial Planning advice • Rebuilding advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The psychology services provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service have been extended until June 2022 (1.8 FTE) • The Bendigo Bank Community Recovery Grants program has provided \$66k for a Youth Worker. CHIRF received \$439,326 over two years for a youth recovery officer for Mallacoota and Cann River.
Housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caravan Park occupants • Rental property shortfall • End of COVID-19 rental moratorium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MADRA wrote to EGSC expressing concern about potential evictions of those people living in caravans at the foreshore caravan park. This issue was resolved. • MADRA is working with EGSC, BRV and DFFH on ways in which a shortfall of rental housing can be urgently rectified. This includes housing for visiting specialists and tradespeople. • MADRA is seeking advice on the legal aspects of post COVID-19 moratorium evictions. • MADRA is working with Homes Victoria seeking the purchase of land and the building of an initial 10 homes (five three-bedroom homes and five townhouses) and is also looking to Government to provide homes for employees.
Transitional, Independent Living and Emergency Housing	<p>There is a shortfall of transitional, independent living and emergency and housing in our district.</p> <p>MDHSS has taken steps to rectify this shortfall with the purchase of the Ballymena Holiday Units which will be renamed the Miva Cottages MDHSS has also purchased an adjoining block of land.</p> <p>MDHSS has been awarded \$2.15m of Black Summer grant funding to accessible cottages for the frail affected by bushfires.</p>
Rebuilding	
Planning and Building Permits	We continue to work with EGSC to resolve issues and to address cases that do not fall neatly within guidelines.

PEOPLE AND WELLBEING PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Extension of a waiver on water rates.	In February 2021 MADRA wrote to East Gippsland water seeking an extension of the waiver of water rates for those who have been unable to rebuild for reasons beyond their control. EGW responded stating will be reinstating water service charges and water consumption/volume will be reinstated from November 2020 but sewerage services charges will be waived until the 7th of June 2021. This is a further six-month extension for the sewerage service charges, providing the property is not sold or re-developed.
Emergency Health Beds	
There is a lack of care for those who have received hospital treatment but need interim care pending return to home.	The Community Health Infrastructure and Resilience Fund (CHIRF) has sought funding for a Mallacoota Wellbeing and Recovery Centre which will include six independent suites built to medical standards which can be used for patients who cannot temporarily operate from home or cannot be transferred to hospital, patients who require short term care recovery, respite care and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Included in the proposal is a small rehabilitation gym, a hydrotherapy pool, equipment room and office facilities.
Community Connections/Social Opportunities	
Community Connections Worker	Around one-fifth of our population does not have a connection to the internet and around one-third lives alone. The role of the Community Connections worker will be to support those without access to the internet and to assist building community connections and networks. Grant writing assistance has been sought to obtain funding for this position.
Reclink	Reclink Australia has partnered with Vic Health to deliver sports and recreation programs for Mallacoota, Genoa, and Cann Valley districts. The aim of the program is to regain a sense of fun, increase social inclusion and improve physical and mental health for residents. Activities will cater for a variety of ages, abilities and interests. Reclink commenced in our district in January 2021 with the employment of two locals – Callista Cooper and Cassandra McNamara. Sabine Amos has since been employed as Community Connector.
Pop Up Drive-In Theatre	The Methodist Ladies College (MLC) donated funding for an inflatable drive-in cinema screen that can be used for social events and to showcase the work of local film makers.
Mallacoota Sea Eagles Dragon Boat Club	In 2022, the Sea Eagles received an East Gippsland Community Foundation grant of \$15k to go towards an equipment upgrade. This was in addition to an earlier grant which ReLink successfully applied for.
Yarn by the Sea	A regular opportunity to meet and create with yarn.
Kinder Kids Sunflower Trail	A sunflower trail at Genoa planted by our Kindergarten children.

PEOPLE AND WELLBEING PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Community-led recovery and resilience through music in Far East Gippsland encompassing Coota Gathers and Grounded Locally, Connect Globally.	Coota Gathers was an opportunity held in December 2020 for local people to get together in an informal way to share food, listen to music and catch up. This event was organised by local volunteers including Sara Renwick-Lau, Trindi Suratman, Katie Symes, James Wallace, Jesse Nation, Tom Reichelt, Don Ashby and Brodie Gaudion. Coota Gathers has morphed to a social enterprise and, together with the new Grounded Locally, Connected Globally program has received BSBR funding to deliver a Far East Music Festival and a mentoring and livestream project.
Our Youth	
School Social Worker	Ongoing funding for the school social worker position is being sought
Family Fun Day to bring families together to celebrate resilience and to provide an opportunity for consultation and fun.	A Family Fun Day was held in March 2021. Participants included: Head Space, Reclink, the Cooperating Parish of Croajinglong, Save the Children, Teagan Bruce (face painting), United Gippsland, Costa Salvaje Tacos, Sundayys, Larry's Coffee Van, SES, Lions Club, the Ashby family, Be You program, EGSC and Regional Development Victoria. The aim of the Family Fun Day was to bring families together to connect and have fun, supporting wellbeing and recovery. 'Connect and share' activities such as this bring community groups together in a support environment. The Community Wellbeing group
Mallacoota and Cann River Youth Worker	In addition to \$60k pledged by the Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation, CHIRF has now received funding of \$439,326 over two years for a youth recovery officer for Mallacoota and Cann River. This funding has come through BRV and Commonwealth Disaster Funding Arrangements
Emergency Management	
Collate community concerns and suggestions and present these to the relevant agencies seeking action and answers.	MADRA wrote to EGSC in November 2020 outlining community concerns around a range of preparedness issues and making recommendations as to how these could be addressed. These issues are progressively being addressed with various agencies and authorities. In late 2020, MADRA wrote several letters emphasising the importance of a COVID-19 plan for our peak tourist season.
Commemorating the Bushfires	
Complete the ADF Bushfire Memorial	A working group will be formed to progress this project. A proposal is for the story boards to depict pictures of the missing badges and reflect the wording on the original plaque relating to the ADF and Emergency Services.
The Arts, Music and Creative Activities	
The arts, music and creative activities have already played a significant role in our recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beach ukulele sessions - sponsored by CHIRF and led by Padma Newsome - were held to teach people how to play. The Mallacoota Arts Council recently received grant funding to build a roof over the Croajinglong Centre courtyard

PEOPLE AND WELLBEING PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
	<p>which will enable more classes and get-togethers to be conducted in a more appropriate space for those activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The very moving Epicormic exhibition reflected on our experiences of the bushfires. The loss and signs of removal were felt by many that visited. • The healing singing group led by Eva Grunden which was established shortly after the fires and continues. • The many beautiful face masks made and distributed by the Friendship sewing circle. • The Coota Gathers event in December 2020 combined food and music so locals could get together and chill out. • Yarn by the Sea, an opportunity for yarn crafters to meet, yarn and create in a relaxed atmosphere. • The bushfire commemoration film which was produced by locals. • The Music Recovery program initiated by Padma Newsome and Susannah Keebler in addition to their research and thinking on creative recovery. • Jade Oakley conducted a bird making workshop. The birds were created from anodised wire and hand-dyed silk and contained coloured lights. Over one hundred birds were made by community. • The 2021 Sounds Better Together event in January saw big name artists perform in Mallacoota. Not only was it a great night, but locals did also not have to do the leg work in putting the show together. The organisers were very sensitive and responsive to feedback from the community in the planning of the event.
Music Victoria Regional Development Program	Mallacoota has been selected as one of three communities in Victoria to take part in a pilot program designed to address the needs of musicians, music professionals and music communities. This program also provides employment on a two-day per week 12-month project for a Regional Music Co-ordinator.
Our History	
Bunker Museum Bush Tucker Walk	Funding of \$25k has been granted by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR).

Figure 61: People and Wellbeing Projects Underway, Funded and/or Completed

Buildings and Infrastructure

BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Emergency Facilities	
Upgrade the Mallacoota Main Hall including independent power and water, roof hardening, all abilities access, toilets/showers, and kitchen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for concept plans to assist the community consultation process has been received. EGSC successfully applied for a Local Economic Recovery (LER) grant to upgrade the Main Hall with \$818k being allocated for the project. This is in addition to funding received by EGSC in 2020 for halls works across the region.
Upgrade the Genoa Hall including standalone solar battery back-up system, toilet, and shower upgrades.	Funding of \$50k has been received under the Community Facilities Funding program to upgrade the Genoa Hall. In 2022, the East Gippsland Community Foundation provided an additional \$25,164 to secure and sustain access to essential services at the Genoa Hall. This will be used to purchase a diesel generator and other items to complete the upgrade.
Expand the Emergency Services Shed to include a home for the Coast Guard boat/equipment and Surf Life Saving Club equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project preceded the bushfires and has taken on additional significance following the bushfires. The SES, Coastguard and Surf Life Saving Club are working with EMV to progress this initiative. \$2m was allocated in the 2121 State budget this project and \$2.57m was allocated in the Black Summer grant round.
Genoa Fire Shed and emergency firefighting equipment at Genoa.	A private donation will be used to help build a small Community Fire Shed that will house three water trailers. Basic private trailer setups with water-pod, pump and hose were used by a few locals in town during the fires to great effect especially for putting out spot fires, ember attack and mopping up hot spots after the main front had passed.
The SES identified the need for a cache of emergency equipment at Genoa. This will be a lockable storage trailer.	The trailer has been approved by the SES regional manager. SES assets has approved this, and the trailer is expected to arrive in April.
Town Planning	
Expand the industrial estate to attract missing trades/services to Mallacoota.	A consultant has been appointed by EGSC to carry out an Industrial Land Supply Assessment for Mallacoota to scope opportunities and identify potential solutions.
Community and Visitor Facilities	
Parks, lakes, and beach infrastructure including provision for floating jetties and all abilities access.	Much of this infrastructure is being replaced as part of insurance provisions. MADRA is working with DELWP, EGSC and Parks Victoria to ensure replacement infrastructure meets safety and user needs.
Mallacoota skate park upgrade including landscaping and a BMX pump track.	Funded The project is at the tender stage.

BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Swimming and Hydrotherapy pools.	<p>Life Saving Victoria (LSV) is campaigning for state and federal governments to fund regional aquatic centres with heated lap lane and hydrotherapy pools, gyms and other community facilities based on European models for such facilities in small communities. LSV will assist with economic costing and a business plan. Mallacoota has been selected as the first town in LSV's campaign for funding.</p> <p>In addition, the Community Health, Infrastructure and Resilience Fund (CHIRF) has applied for funding for a hydrotherapy pool as part of a Mallacoota Wellbeing and Recovery Centre project.</p>
Genoa Tennis Courts refurbishment.	Funded
Mudbrick Pavilion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donated funds of \$100k have been pledged for kitchen refurbishment works. These funds were generously raised by a group of McDonalds franchisees. The East Gippsland Community Foundation has provided \$67,000 for the purchase of back-up generators for the Main Hall, the Mudbrick Pavilion, and the Community Clubrooms. Concept plans for the refurbishment of the remainder of the Mudbrick Pavilion have been developed. Funding of \$493,268 for the upgrade has been allocated from the Black Summer grant program. Funding of \$493,268 for the upgrade has been allocated from the Black Summer grant program.
The Mallacoota Field and Game Club lost all its facilities during the fires.	The Field and Game Club is working with EGSC and BRV on grant and planning applications to rebuild Club facilities.
The Mallacoota Pony Club lost all its facilities during the bushfires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pony Club has received some donations and grant funding and is seeking additional funding to replace equipment and clubroom facilities. T LER funding of \$296k was announced in May 2021.
The Mallacoota Golf and Country Club suffered damage to its grounds during the bushfires and is seeking funding for revegetation and remediation purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BRV is working with the Golf Club on a funding application under the Local Economic Recovery program. LER funding of \$1.89m was announced in May 2021.
Maurice Ave streetscape including footpaths, seating, and improved access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EGSC has established Project Control and Reference Groups comprising EGSC and representatives from community groups to explore enhancements to Maurice Ave. Following community consultation, a final concept plan is being prepared.
Bastion Point safety, car parking and beach access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EGSC has established Project Control and Reference Groups comprising EGSC and representatives from community groups to explore enhancements to the Bastion Point area. This project is on hold as EGSC has advised no funding has been allocated

BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Heritage and Cultural Sites Note: Aboriginal Healing and Culture will be addressed in Chapter Five.	
Genoa Bridge.	Work is underway to rebuild the Genoa Bridge in a heritage style.
WW11 Bunker Museum – Bush Tucker Garden.	MDHS has applied for funding from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) grant program.
Communications	
NBN	NBN was rolled out across Mallacoota ahead of schedule. Overhead cabling was destroyed during the bushfires. Cabling is now underground from Cann River.
Improved mobile internet/Black Spot rectification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In April 2021 funding of \$693,882 was approved for the installation of a 4G base station to enable Telstra 4G mobile coverage at Gipsy Point. In August 2021, the Victorian State Government announced the Victorian Government and Telstra are investing \$2.2m to improve 4G mobile capacity and resilience which will help businesses, residents, and visitors to Mallacoota.
Energy	
AusNet emergency battery and generator/microgrid.	<p>The Mallacoota Sustainable Energy Group (MSEG) and AusNet have been interested in and worked toward a town microgrid for several years.</p> <p>On 27 May 2021 an AusNet-funded 1 MWH battery, backup generator and microgrid technology were commissioned. This enables the town to be ‘islanded’ when the main grid is out.</p>
Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Program (CMSE)	<p>DELWP and AusNet are working with the Mallacoota community to increase their bushfire and energy resilience through a \$7 million Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Program (shared with Corryong and Omeo).</p> <p>Following the 2019-20 bushfires, an opportunity was recognised in rural settings to provide reliable power independently of the electricity grid during bushfires and extreme weather events.</p> <p>The program will bring advanced microgrids and other energy infrastructure to Mallacoota to increase access to locally generated energy and storage.</p> <p>Emergency Services, Community and Commercial buildings were canvassed for interest in establishing local microgrids around Mallacoota. Residential community members had the opportunity to be involved by expressing interest in installing smart energy control devices and replacing energy-hungry electric hot water systems with more efficient heat pump hot water units.</p> <p>Status: Community engagement phase complete 28 Jan 2022. DELWP/AusNet reviewing Expressions of Interest and preparing for next phase</p>

BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Community Solar System.	Funding of \$50,000 has been received from a consortium of Bendigo Community Banks to install the first phase in a community solar system on the East Gippsland Wastewater Treatment Plant. Proceeds from the sale of the energy produced will be used to invest in future renewable energy projects in our district. This project is underway.
Electric Vehicle Charger in Mallacoota CBD.	Under DELWP's Destination Charging Across Victoria grant program, both EGSC and MSEG put in applications for the installation of an Electric Vehicle Charger in Mallacoota. Whilst MSEG's application was unsuccessful, EGSC was awarded a grant. We are currently collaborating toward a successful outcome for the Mallacoota community.
Access and Safety	
Road repairs and upgrades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding of \$12.7m has been received to refurbish the Genoa-Mallacoota Road with an additional \$2m possible. MADRA has lobbied for funding to improve the Princes Highway. Repairs to the Genoa-Mallacoota Road are underway. The Department of Transport has established a Community Reference Group to work with the Regional Roads Victoria project team. Ideas will be shortlisted in mid-2022. From mid-2022 to mid-2023 technical studies will be undertaken including concept designs, environmental and cultural heritage investigations, and economic evaluations. Construction is expected to commence from mid to late 2023.¹⁴⁰
Develop a footpath plan for Mallacoota and District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage One of work on the Mirrabooka Road footpath between Raheen Drive and the Lakeside Drive intersections commenced on the 7th of March 2022. The new path will be two metres wide and starts at the Lakeside Drive intersection and runs 450 metres to the corner near Raheen Drive. A pedestrian island will allow people to cross one lane of Lakeside Drive and wait or rest before crossing the other lane, this will feature advisory signs and line marking. Drainage infrastructure at the intersection of Mirrabooka Road and Lakeside Drive will also be improved. Stage Two will commence in June 2022 and include a guard rail along an 80-metre section of the road shoulder.

Figure 62: Buildings and Infrastructure Projects Underway, Funded and/or Completed

¹⁴⁰ <https://engage.vic.gov.au/mallacoota-road-upgrades>

BUSINESS AND ECONOMY PROJECTS UNDERWAY, FUNDED AND/OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
More Strings to our Economic Bow	
Build on our creative talents through tours, packages, and classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDBTA is pursuing several initiatives and working with Regional Development Victoria (RDV) on the 'Visit Mallacoota' program. • The Arts Council is conducting art classes and recently received a grant for a roof over the courtyard which will enable more usable teaching space.
Adding value to existing businesses.	An example is Mallacoota Abalone Limited which is looking at ways to use abalone guts and shells for 'value added' products.
More industrial land to attract new and different businesses for which there is a need. For example, a maker of boat covers.	A consultant has been appointed by EGSC to carry out an Industrial Land Supply Assessment for Mallacoota to scope opportunities and identify potential solutions.
Tourism Opportunities	
Beautification projects to make our district more attractive including street scaping and refurbishment projects	EGSC has established Project Control and Reference Groups comprising EGSC and representatives from community groups to explore enhancements to Maurice Ave and Bastion Point.
Parks, lakes, and beach infrastructure including provision for floating jetties and all abilities access.	Much of this infrastructure is being replaced as part of insurance provisions. MADRA is working with DELWP, EGSC and Parks Victoria to ensure replacement infrastructure meets access, safety, and user needs. MDBTA is also supporting disabled access to some Parks Victoria jetty sites.
Additional visitor attractions such as mountain bike trails and bush tucker walks.	<p>MDBTA is exploring the creation of a mountain bike trail.</p> <p>Mallacoota District Historical Society has applied for funding for a bush tucker walk for the WW11 Bunker Museum.</p> <p>The Genoa Town Committee is looking at ways to recreate the Old Genoa School site which might also include a bush tucker walk.</p>
Ecotourism initiatives	MDBTA is working on ecotourism initiatives.
Digital Recovery	
Wilderness Workspace Mallacoota (Digital Hub)	<p>Community consultation has been conducted which indicated support for a digital hub and EGSC has provided funding for a feasibility study.</p> <p>The project is constantly evolving and now has the support of ACRE and potential state budget funding.</p>

Figure 63: Business and Economy Projects Underway, Funded and/or Completed

Environment and Biodiversity

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Natural Environment Priorities	
Encourage sustainable and renewable energy projects.	The Mallacoota Sustainable Energy Group (MSEG) is looking at several sustainable energy projects including participation in the national My Energy Marketplace project, a Community Solar System and community-owned Electric Vehicle Chargers. EGSC is also exploring the installation of an Electric Vehicle Charger in Mallacoota. See draft Recovery Plan <i>Chapter Seven Buildings and Infrastructure</i> .
On Ground Works	
The joint Rotary Balwyn/Friends of Mallacoota seed propagation project.	Native seeds have been sent to Melbourne schools for propagation. The seedlings will be returned to Mallacoota for revegetation purposes and to help people re-establish their gardens. Seeds include the Running Postman ground cover and endangered Betka bottlebrush. Several Casuarina seeds have been included as this tree was severely burned and is the main food source for Glossy Black Cockatoos.
Seek additional human and other resources for protection and management of our wilderness (Ongoing maintenance and recovery)	In September 2021, Parks Victoria advertised an additional three x two-year Fixed Term Positions for Ranger (Field Services) to deliver fire recovery services. The roles encompass maintenance of assets, infrastructure, and facilities; and the field delivery of fire recovery projects.
Fuel Management	
Encourage scientifically backed, viable and well-resourced fuel management programs.	The Fuel Management Working Group is a multi-agency working group which is working with fire scientists and other experts to build bushfires 'lessons learned' and advances in fuel management techniques into our fuel management regime.
Fuel Management Webinar series	The Fuel Management Group developed the educational Fuel Management Webinar series which is available at madrecovery.com . The aim of this series is to give more knowledge to our community, so we feel represented, safer, and armed to make informed decisions about fuel management.
Development of four initial fuel management plans for areas of high risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shady Gully • Mortimer's Paddock • The back of Terra Nova Drive • The Western Front. 	<p>The Fuel Management Group is a multi-agency working group which is developing fuel management plans for our district in conjunction with community and the relevant government agencies.</p> <p>A community consultation session was held on 28th of April 2021.</p> <p>In 2022, a conditional grant of \$50k was received from the East Gippsland Community Foundation for a Fuel Management Scoping Study.</p>

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY OR COMPLETED	
Project/Description	Status
Follow on fuel management plans will address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karbeethong • Lakeside Drive • Genoa • Gipsy Point. 	
Clearing burned trees and debris build up within our townships.	Noting community concerns, we wrote to EGSC in February 2021 seeking their plans for the clearing of burned trees and debris build up within our townships. A response from EGSC was received in April 2021 and is included in this Plan.
Lake and Estuary Health	
Ascertain the health of our lakes and estuary system post the bushfires.	East Gippsland Catchment Management authority initiatives including Mouth article on lake health (18 th February 2021) and community events including boat trips and walk and talks. Our lake system is in good health.

Figure 64: Environment and Biodiversity Projects Underway, Funded and/or Completed

Aboriginal Healing and Culture

To be incorporated following consultation with Traditional Owners.