



ALPINE VALLEYS

BUSHFIRE COMMUNITY RECOVERY FORUM

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Notes from Bushfire Forum: Our Community Supporting Recovery by Peter Williams

- On 23rd February 2020 the Alpine Valley Community Leadership Inc and Susan Benedyka ran a workshop for people involved in Bushfire Recovery
- 200 people - mainly from the Alpine Valleys and Upper Murray
- Information booths – ACRE, Rotary, Regional Arts Victoria, FRRR, Rural Finance Assistance, Landcare, Wildlife Victoria, Salvation Army, Tourism NE, Gateway Health, North East Catchment Management, RDV etc
- Attendees were asked to write down what was working well, what needed to happen and ideas they had.
- I have synthesized the output from all of notes

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Warnings

- The emergency warning information via the app was good but...
- Need for greater clarity on difference between advice, watch and act, emergency and evacuation notices.
- What's in place for those who don't access digital channels

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What has worked well

- Communities self organising their initial response and relief efforts was raised 5 times
- Other - events, visits from politicians and other prominent people, the amount of donations, relief centres, immediate needs being met (situational)
- Grassroots and community groups are making a visible impact. Eg Blazeaid, Rotary

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What has been problematic?

- Lack of clarity of who does what (9 times)
- Bottom up approach would work best (5 times)
- Too many forms and complexity of some (5 times).
 - Suggestion: single registration that could be used across and getting help out to people with the forms, sit at kitchen table rather than getting people to come into town
- Lack of support for local and small businesses - a problem (5 times)
- Difficulty in understanding what support was available (3 times)
- Issues in communities that spanned the Vic/NSW border (2 times)

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Concerns

- Vulnerable people including farmers, indigenous, those having mental health issues.
- Suggestion for alternative mental health support beyond 1-on-1 counselling
- Fatigue building in the communities
- People cashed up with grants and insurance monies, may not be in the best frame of mind to use those funds wisely
- What is happening with all of the donated money? (2 times)
- What support will there be for tourism (3 times)

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Resilience

- Came up a number of times. Particularly about telco and power solutions for future fire events
- Ongoing impact of climate change was also raised

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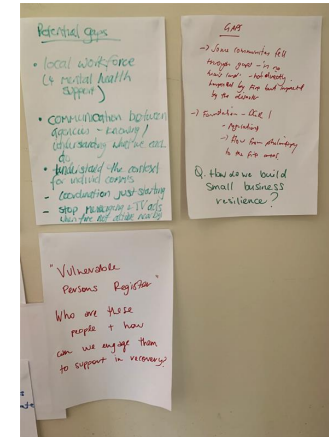
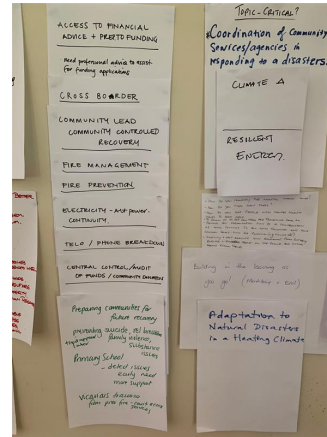
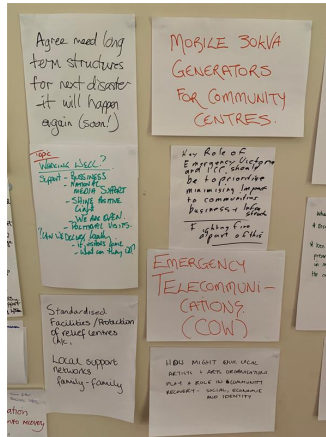
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Other Suggestions

- Involving Arts and Culture as part of recovery
- Increasing resources for local councils

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The following pages are transcriptions of the notes that the forum participants put on the wall. Examples pictured below



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Building connection between Community,
Individuals and Services / Government

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- STATE GOVT CALLOUT
 - Visit VIC, Host something in a Fire Affected Community
 - Events Managed to co-ordinate any influx of businesses visiting
 - Make sure it's LOCAL
 - Collaborate Local Govt / Local Business / Local Groups
 - Curated Field Trips: Visit Sources and Business affected and active in the space (RECOVERY)
- HOW DO WE KEEP PEOPLE IN THE AREAS
 - So many have lost so much
 - They will relocate if there is no work here
 - What is being done for small business CASHFLOW?

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WISHING WELL

- Communications work well
- Evacuation ?? Works ??
- APP
- People are hitting the wall and fatiguing now
- Cross border issues
- Developing a foundation for community controlled funding

WORKING WELL

- Music and Young people
- Community Still Organising
 - eg Working Bees
 - Schools Groups

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- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

- From Bottom UP not Top DOWN

- **PROCESS TO ACTIVATE FUNDING**

- SIMPLIFY – Under Stress
- HOW To Access -
- GAP - Register Once - Multiple Access
- - Building D/base - One Stop Shop
- Infrastructure / Road Closures
- Delay Purchases

- **COMMUNITY HUB - COORYONG**

- Immediate Needs MET
- Activate Support Gov Level Army v v
- GAP Who provided what

- **COMMUNITY GUIDELINES**

- Places to Go
- Local Business Support

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Advocate for Farmers and possibly a closer Forum to Corryong

Known Increase in Family violence after Emergency / Disaster
- How best to Mitigate / Educate / HELP ?

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I would like to talk about FUNDING for the people on the ground working, rebuilding and cleaning up.

The people who have been there the whole way through that know what's really going on – on the ground.

Lisa Sharpe
Bushfire Support – Albury / Wodonga

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- ENSURING that Arts, Culture & Heritage are considered as imperative in recovery
- NOT WORKING WELL
 - Knowledge of support available to consumers
 - ie Salvation Army (SALVOS) & Financial Support
- EMERGENCY RESPONDERS
 - Flexible Volunteering now operational not CFA
- WATER SUPPLIES
 - Non existent eg Stanley
 - MGW Licence → Removing Ground Water
- COMPLIMENTARY ALTERNATIVES to Mental Health Talk Therapy
- SMALL BIZ PROJECTS

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WHATS WORKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Cohesion• Fundraising• Recognising prior learning	WHAT HAS BEEN WORKING WELL <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community response on ground from outside / inside regions• People reacting ? ... ? To orgs with resources to support• Individuals gathering support to support services eg Fires• Activation of community led networks eg Team Orange
GAPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CALD community languages → not provided for• Understanding of existing skills especially new arrivals and other vulnerable groups• Clarity and access to Funds \$, Grants, Supports by speaker and business	WHAT ARE THE GAPS IN SUPPORT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overlaps in bureaucratic response• Who is co-ordinating• Paperwork / Complexity of paperwork• Expectation – re go online to do this and access support• We need to be thinking

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**HOW to introduce a mechanism for Government
Support to build long term community resilience**

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RESOURCING FRONTLINE

- Local organisations who are in here for the long haul
(eg rural financial counsellors)

How do we live in fire prone areas in an era of climate change?

THE NEED FOR STRONG COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED

- Resourcing
- Ken Lay could give his presentation to higher bureaucrats in Melb – we are preaching to the converted here today!

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- GETS WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER
- COMMUNITIES ON ALERT
- EMERGENCY RELIEF
 - Short Term Emergency response / Medium Emergency required longer
- RENEWABLE ENERGY - Rebuild it differently as not enough early
- CELL BANK - Similar issues so don't recreate wheel
- TREES IN PADDOCKS (SHADE)
 - Stock / Animal welfare / Restock of property
- NO RESOURCES / HUMAN RESOURCES ORGANISATIONS
 - Interchangeable support process between Shires
 - Resource Local Council

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CO-ORDINATION OF RESOURCES IN

EARLY RECOVERY

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POTENTIAL GAPS	GAPS	VULNERABLE PERSONS REGISTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Workforce (for mental health support) ▪ Communication between agencies – knowing / understanding what we can do ▪ Understand the context for individual comm's ▪ Co-ordination just starting ▪ Stop messaging and TV ads when fire not active nearby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some communities fell through the gaps (in NO MANS LAND). Not directly impacted by fire but impacted by the overall disaster • FOUNDATION – DGR 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulations - flow from Philanthropy to the fire areas <p><u>QUESTION</u></p> <p>HOW DO WE BUILD SMALL BUSINESS RESILIENCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are these people and how can we engage them to support in recovery

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- ACCESS To financial advise and preparation to funding
Need professional advice to assist for funding applications
- CROSS BORDER
Community lead / Community controlled recovery
- FIRE MANAGEMENT
- FIRE PREVENTION
- ELECTRICITY
Alternate power continuity
- TELCO / PHONE BREAKDOWN
- CENTRAL CONTROL
Audit of funds / Community Donations

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PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR FUTURE RECOVERY

PREVENTION OF (OFTEN APPEAR LATER)
Suicide, Breakdowns, family violence, substance issues

PRIMARY SCHOOL
Detect issues early / more support needed

VICARIOUS TRAUMA
From previous fire / can't access services

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TOPIC
CRITICAL

Co-ordination of
Community Services /
Agencies in responding
to disasters

CLIMATE Δ

ADAPTATION TO
NATURAL DISASTERS IN
A HEATING CLIMATE

Building in the learning
as you go!
Monitoring & Evaluation

RESILIENT ENERGY

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- HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY the Mental Health Issues
- HOW DO YOU then help them
- HOW DO YOU get people with Mental Health Issues to then seek help
- TO THEN FOLLOW UP on those initial contacts to see how they are travelling later on
- FORMING AN ORGANISATION
Such as a collaboration of local councils to all comm's together and have common goals around planning (eg Housing etc)
- SIMPLIFY & HELP EXECUTE GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FORMS
From suitably Qualified and Empathic people on the ground in an informal space (eg around the kitchen table)

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**AGREE WE NEED LONG
TERM STRUCTURES FOR
NEXT DISASTER – AS IT
WILL HAPPEN AGAIN (AND
TOO SOON)**

**MOBILE 30 KVA GENERATORS
FOR COMMUNITY CENTRES**

**EMERGENCY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
(COW)**

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WORKING WELL

- SUPPORT
 - Business
 - National Media Support
 - Shine Positive Light
 - We are Open
 - Political Visits
- ?? Can we Deliver Locally ??
 - If visitors come
 - What can Visitors do when they visit

KEY ROLE OF EMERGENCY VICTORIA & ICC
Should be to prioritise minimising impact to
communities, business & infrastructure
Fighting Fires is a part of this

Standardised Facilities / Production of Relief Centres
Local Support Networks - Family

How might our local Artists & Arts Organisations play
a role in community recovery
– Social, Economic & Identity

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**ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIFFERENCES WHEN WORKING
WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

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WORKING WELL

- WORKSHOPS – Happening and well attended
- GOV AGENCIES TAKING A STEP BACK – Letting the focus be on local wisdom / knowledge / experience
- DONATIONS – Goods vs \$
- A SET OF PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE – Consistency & Transparency in recovery planning & practice

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POTENTIAL GAPS

- MAKE HASTE SLOWLY – How do we support communities to manage their individual & community recovery process
- MESSAGING OF EMERGENCY & EVACTUATION – very confusing, too broad and frightened many people evacuating from Beechworth & Wodonga
- RELYING ON APPS
- Developing a foundation for community controlled funding

TOPICS

- Co-Ordination
- Knowing & understanding what's already happening
- How to engage communication information on what's available
- Messaging ??????
 - Emergency
 - Evacuate
 - Watch & Act
 - Advice

HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORT
BUSHFIRE VICTIMS

AND WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THAT'S
DIFFERENT TO WHAT ADULTS NEED

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- TOURISM – Devastated
- NO VINTAGE
- ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE – do we deserve it?
- BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES
- EDUCATION ON WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY
 - Evacuate Now
 - Use of App
 - How do local Community groups communicate
 - Preparation to enact plans on a local level
 - Tourists vs Locals

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WORKING WELL	GAPS	ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase Mental Health services ▪ Different ways to provide them locally ▪ Provision of counselling support to Firefighters & IMTs (DELWP) ▪ Starting to provide support additional to Towing Shire ▪ We are fairly experienced in fire and recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HOUSING on site • Ongoing support for small business • Tourism – Local Visitors for day/weekend trips • Assistance with Form Filling – Visibility / Access to case support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAKEAWAYS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What long-term support can groups like Rotary provide? • WHAT'S BEEN WORKING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local response from organisations such as Rotary • COLLECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING SOLUTION FOCCUSSED • BACK UP SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL FROM LGA's • BLAZE-AIDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination of on ground support – Practical and hands on

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HOW DO WE SUPPORT

Psychological resilience as we see more frequent intense fires
– the fear of it happening again

RECOGNIZING EXISTING NETWORKS

(eg school groups) as basis for immediate early work and
capability

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- SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT
 - Even if not directly fire affected
- CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT
 - Are the criteria for assessing impact on small business too tight / stringent?
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT & STAFF – Overwhelmed
- CHALLENGE for medium to long term support
- INSURANCE
 - Some now 'CASHED UP'
 - Under Insured
 - Non Payment if not directly affected

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VOLUNTEERS IN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

(Managing Reserves etc) or staff in FFm Vic who have had their own properties impacted but still are serving the community

OPPORTUNITIES TO 'NETWORK'

Or streamline community organisations to make it easier for people to play their role and have support

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COMMUNICATION → Isolated Communities being cut off

LONG TERM MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

→ Need for trust & links between health & agriculture services
(eg farmers do not want to call a mental health hotline)

FILLING OUT FORMS

Help is needed (so stressful) → Hubs are a good idea

LONG TERM FOCUS

Farmers will take about 18 mths just getting back on their feet
and then true impact hits

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DO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAVE A RECOVERY ROLE?

HOW ARE THEY ACCESSED

THE FOUNDATION IDEA

- We have a Foundation for the Region
- How can we work with existing structures / foundations
- Complying with charity laws / regulations

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THANK YOU