



Lexton-Ben Major Fire Blaze Aid

Community spirit is alive and well in Lexton following the December 20 fire which burned more than 3000 hectares.

Volunteers started coming to Lexton in early January to help remove and replace fencing burned in the Lexton-Ben Major Fire. Blaze Aid Camp Coordinators Bruce Hindson and Janis Hobbs have helped to place 266 volunteers who have completed 33 kilometres of fencing.

The Lexton base camp has served 3795 meals, fitted out 48 Blaze Aid tool trailers and cleared 65 kilometres of burned fencing.

Volunteers range from tourists on holidays, retired couples who regularly donate their time to Blaze Aid and children and adults who decided to 'do their bit' for the community on their annual leave.

Ms Hobbs said community groups in the Pyrenees have also been very generous with donations to buy groceries and supplies, as well as dropping in ready-made meals. District Lions Clubs, in particular, have been committed to meal preparation.

"They might come and do a weekend, or they might be a local and come once a week," she said. "For the first two and half weeks we had a live in cook, cooking

breakfast, lunch and dinner, and she went home spent.

Ms Hobbs said Lexton district farmers have been overwhelmed with the support. "They are absolutely very grateful. A couple of farmers insisted on coming here to cook the barbie for dinner," she said.

Ms Hobbs said she decided to get involved in Blaze Aid after her home and property was flooded in Charlton.

"We'd been overwhelmed with the response from people who didn't know us coming to help, and personally I thought, I've got to do something about this one day when I can, and that opportunity came in 2016 at Scotsburn/Buninyong," she said.

"Every farmer that have had their fences burned down, regardless of whether they've had their house burned down, they've still got to manage their farm and whatever stock they've got left, as well as how to do I fence my property?"

Ms Hobbs said Lexton's Blaze Aid camp was also serving as a base for fitting out tool trailers for nearly 50 other Blaze Aid Camps across Australia's fire affected communities. She said the trailers were built in Ballarat before she organized the transport of the trailers.

On December 20 and 21 2019, the Lexton-Ben Major fire burned approximately 3,000 hectares of farmland and bush. The impact of this fire included one primary residence, four sheds, in excess of 1,000 sheep, many kilometres of internal and boundary fencing, significant loss of pasture and tree damage.

Pyrenees Shire Council thanks the efforts of all volunteers during the fire and recovery period, including (but not limited to), CFA, Forest Fire Management, DELWP, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Blaze Aid etc.

L-R: Kim Westrope, Neil Howell, Ian Keith, Chris Davey and Rod Grant. Back: Dean Kennedy.



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Improving Link Roads

Pyrenees Shire Council has committed to improving the Shire's link roads with a series of recent and planned capital works aiming to connect communities, provide safer roadways and improve key freight routes in the region.

Pyrenees Shire Council Mayor Tanya Kehoe said there was a renewed emphasis on removing barriers on the Shire's 626.33km of combined link and collector roads.

"We're working to remove impediments on link roads for residents, businesses, visitors and transport services," Cr Kehoe said. **"Our ten-year goal is to have the Shire's entire link road network gazetted, so that we can safely accommodate heavier vehicles like those required for the agriculture and transport industries."**

"Projects like these improve the quality and safety of our roads which is important for keeping our Shire connected."

Recent capital construction projects include:

- Reconstruction of Bridge 13, Beaufort-Carnham Road (completed August 2019)



- Replacement of a bridge and installation of guard rail on Landsborough-Elmhurst Road (completed October 2019)
- Reconstruction of the Twin Bridges on Landsborough-Elmhurst Road (completed December 2019)
- A total of 2.7km of safety and pavement improvement works on Eurambeen-Streatham Road (completed in two stages during 2018-19 and January 2020)
- Reconstruction of the Eurambeen-Streatham Road Bridge south of Geelong Road, projected to begin in March 2020.

The listed projects represent more than \$4.9million in combined investment from the Federal Government's Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Victorian Government's Fixing Country Roads Program, Pyrenees Shire Council, and a jointly-funded project with Ararat Rural City Council.

Pyrenees Shire Council has forecasted that the Eurambeen-Streatham and Moonambel-Natte Yallock Roads will be gazetted within the next 12months following significant investment into large-scale bridge and road works. Once approved, these Roads will add an additional 53.15km of gazetted roads to the Shire's network.

"These projects are part of Council's progressive approach to road maintenance, and a commitment to improving roads throughout the Shire," Cr Kehoe said. **"Our target is to gazette 50% of our link roads within the next 36 months."**

Pyrenees Shire Council's 36 month target is dependent on a similar or increased amount of funding State and Federal Governments for the duration of the projects. These projects will focus on removing barriers such as bridge load limits, and improving safety infrastructure including the provision of guard rails.

In addition to Government grants, Pyrenees Shire Council funds rehabilitation and upgrades of assets through a Capital expenditure budget each financial year. These assets may include roads, parks and gardens, open spaces, recreation and leisure facilities and other property owned or occupied by Council. Any Capital works are determined based on condition assessments and are prioritized based on risk and condition.



Budget preparations underway

A little bit of calculation, a whole lot of number crunching, many meetings and priority prioritizing are just some of the processes Council goes through to put the annual budget together.

There are roads to pave, buildings to paint, babies to weigh, plans to examine (among others) and they all need to be paid for in the budget. The planning process usually takes about six months, and then we are ready to ask for your feedback.

Council will be providing a draft version of the budget for public comment in April and we'll be letting you know some of the key initiatives that are slated for next financial year.

There will be information sessions in Beaufort on April 23 and in Avoca on April 29. These sessions with Council Officers are an opportunity for you to find out how Council operates and provides services to the community.

Council plans to live-stream one of these sessions for the public and the budget will be available to read at our service centres or on our website.

We are also using an online community engagement portal – which is called OurSay. This is an opportunity for you to pose questions or suggestions, and is available on www.oursay.org/pyrenees. You can also write to us via pyrenees@pyrenees.vic.gov.au or to 5 Lawrence Street, Beaufort VIC 3373.

Pyrenees Shire Council celebrates 2020 Australia Day award winners

On Sunday 26th January, Pyrenees Shire Council celebrated what it means to be Australian and reflected on our country's history with Australia Day celebrations at Gallery 127, Avoca.

Australia Day Ambassador **Stefan Romaniw OAM** gave an address and assisted Mayor Tanya Kehoe with presenting the Community Service and Recognition awards for 2020.

Sergeant **Simon Grant** was named Pyrenees Shire's 2020 Citizen of the Year. Simon is described as a proactive, productive and community-oriented natural leader. In addition to being a Victoria Police Sergeant, he is a second Lieutenant with the Cross Roads Rural Fire Brigade, is involved in the Beaufort Football Netball Club and Buangor Cricket Club, served on the St Mary's Primary School Advisory Council and enlisted in the Army Reserve.

James Higgins was awarded Pyrenees Shire's 2020 Young Citizen of the Year. 16 year old James has strong ties to the Avoca community, and has shown strength through adversity. James is a pupil at the Maryborough Education Centre, and plays in the Maryborough Pipe Band, also having toured to the Belfast Tattoo with the National Youth Pipe Band. He was named Avoca's Young Citizen of the Year in 2016.

Avoca Golf Club was awarded Pyrenees Shire Event of the Year for hosting the 2019 Trimax Victorian Sand Green Championships. The Golf Club excelled in hosting the event, with more than 200 golfers catered for over the four day event. The event boosted Avoca's tourism industry, with golfers filling accommodation and utilizing the town's amenities.

A citizenship ceremony was also held on Australia Day, with three new citizens making the Australian Citizenship Pledge at Avoca. New citizens included Jennifer Gankse from Canada, Noa Garoffolo from Israel and Catalina Reichman from the Philippines.

Permits to burn

Council resolved to discontinue the issuing of Schedule 13 Permits to Burn by Private Persons at the November 2019 Council meeting. The Country Fire (CFA) will manage all Schedule 13 Permits into the future.

This change aligns Pyrenees Shire Council with many other municipalities across the State in consolidating the sign-off responsibilities of these permits.

Council will continue to work with the Country Fire Authority District 16 to ensure a smooth transition to this service.

To apply for Schedule 13 Permits to Burn by Private Persons during the 2019/20 Fire Danger Period, residents can contact District 16 by phone: 5352 9600, post: PO BOX 16, Ararat VIC 3377 or email: admin.d16@cfa.vic.gov.au



Stefan Romaniw OAM, Sergeant Simon Grant, Mayor Tanya Kehoe and James Higgins.



James Higgins, Stefan Romaniw OAM, Jim Nolan, Mayor Tanya Kehoe, Sergeant Simon Grant, Louise Staley MP, Jenny Jardine and David Veitch.



Jennifer Gankse, Catalina Reichman, Mayor Tanya Kehoe and Noa Garoffolo.

Looking after our youngest residents

Council Supported Playgroup Facilitator Genevieve Welsh unveiled new toys for the children at playgroup. The Indigenous-themed toys were a hit with the children, as were the Australian animal matching games. Supported Playgroups are suitable for families/guardians and their children from birth to four years. It is a program that incorporates 'smalltalk' practices which refers to quality everyday interactions made up in the following headings: Warm and Gentle, Tuning In, Following Your Child's Lead, Listening and Talking More and Teachable Moments.

Location and times during school terms:

Beaufort Community Church; Park Road, Beaufort 3373
Monday 10.00-12.00

Avoca Children's Centre; 22 Liebig Street, Avoca 3467
Thursday 11.00-1.00

* In-home Support Services are also available



SMILE: Maternal and Child Health Nurses Sally Roberts and Muffy Dyer have been promoting healthy oral health on their visits as part of the Healthy Smiles State Government program. Keep an eye out for the big mouth next time you visit one of our nurses.

Tourism partnership a boost for Pyrenees

Pyrenees Shire Council is proud to announce it has teamed up with the City of Ballarat to promote visitation and grow the tourism economy. The two councils will work together on promoting the natural assets and the fine food and wine the Pyrenees has to offer.

Pyrenees Shire Council CEO Jim Nolan and City of Ballarat CEO Justine Linley have signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

"It is a collaboration between a great city and a great region and will see more tourists visit our area," Mr Nolan said. "The City of Ballarat has 100,000 people right on our doorstep. These people and the growing Melbourne population are an obvious market for the region," he said.

The Memorandum will mean potential opportunities to collaborate in marketing the region, event management and develop a destination management plan.

"The City of Ballarat and the Pyrenees are complementary and this new partnership will provide benefits to both," Mr Nolan said.

Council will start the first collaborative marketing event this autumn, encouraging weekend visits to the Pyrenees. This campaign includes radio, social media, print advertising and will promote food and wine offerings, major events and Mount Cole State Forest.

Mr Nolan said Council would contribute financially to projects which best suited the Pyrenees.

"Previously Council was a member of Visit Ballarat and made an annual financial contribution to the Tourism Board, whereas this way we can allocate budget to specific projects which are tailored for our region," he said.

The Memorandum will cover the next 12 months.

Events

- Pyrenees Petanque Doubles Tournament, Avoca Piste on High Street; Saturday 14 March and Sunday 15 March
- Motor De Pyrenees at Natte Yallock Recreation Reserve; 9am-3pm Sunday 15 March
- VFBV West Regional Rural Championships at Waubra Recreation Reserve; 8.30am-5.30pm Sunday 15 March
- Avoca's Autumn Race Day; 11am-6pm Saturday 21 March
- Avoca Riverside Market; 8am-1pm Sunday 22 March
- Beaufort Market; 8am-1pm Saturday 28 March
- Pyrenees Unearthed Festival on the Avoca River; 11am-5pm Saturday 18 April
- Lake Goldsmith Steam Rally; 10am-5pm Saturday 2 May and Sunday 3 May

For more information search for Eventful Pyrenees on Facebook.

We acknowledge the people past and present of the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, and Djab Wurrung tribes, whose land forms the Pyrenees Shire.