

# Mallacoota District Recovery Update

MARCH 2021



## Choules chooses Coota

What a day for Mallacoota!

On Wednesday, March 10 the Mallacoota community was proud to welcome the HMAS Choules on her first return visit to the town following the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires.

The Choules played a positive and calming role for the Mallacoota community in its time of need, conducting the largest domestic maritime evacuation in Australia's history – more than 1,300 residents, holidaymakers and pets – in early January 2020.

Mayor Cr Mendy Urie, Cr Arthur Allen and a large turnout from the community were at Bastion Point to officially welcome the Choules, then-Commanding Officer of Choules Captain Scott Houlihan and the ship's company for the ceremonial homeporting.

The announcement was widely welcomed and made more special given many of the Navy personnel who forged a strong bond with the people of Mallacoota during the evacuation were present for the ceremony.

The connections between the Choules, her crew and the community are significant.

"It is this connection that prompted Council, on behalf of the community and with the strong support of Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester to permanently recognise the critical role the Choules and the ship's company played in the town's history," Cr Urie said.



"We all know the events surrounding the fires and the immediate response was both a traumatic and uncertain time for our community, and visitors.

"The Australia Defence Force and the Choules provided certainty and a sense of calm at this time. In the many stories which locals and visitors have shared since that time, the efficiency, genuine care and respect that the crew demonstrated during the evacuations remain very strong feelings of that time.

"It is remarkable that in only a matter of a few days, the Choules had completed two evacuation voyages from Mallacoota by sea, when evacuation by road was not possible. It was the most significant domestic naval evacuation of civilians in our history. And as we know, the vulnerable, very sick or injured were also evacuated by aircraft.

"The provision of supplies was also an integral part of the humanitarian effort into Mallacoota, and across East Gippsland."

Captain Scott Houlihan, of the Royal Australian Navy, said it was one of the most rewarding moments, personally and professionally, of a 30-year career.

"Choules has a home," Captain Houlihan said.

"We are humbled and privileged you have chosen to share this incredible part of the work with us. It is a great honour and with the deepest respect we can now call this piece of paradise Choules' home."

An afternoon tea hosted by Council, supplied by Mallacoota businesses and held at the Mallacoota Clubrooms followed the ceremony.

Residents, community leaders, visitors and school children mingled with Navy personnel, inspected the MHR-90 helicopter (which also played a major part in the bushfire response) and heard from Minister for Veteran's Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester.

"The opportunity to maintain a positive

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and lasting connection, stemming from the support and comradery formed after the bushfires, is very much welcomed by the East Gippsland Shire Council, and most importantly by the Mallacoota community," Cr Urie said.

"Thank-you to everyone who turned out for what was a significant and important event in Mallacoota's history, and to the Royal Australia Navy and the HMAS Choules for choosing Mallacoota," Cr Urie said.

To watch the ceremonial homeporting, visit <https://bit.ly/3crLs7A>.



## Mallacoota Gun Club rebuild

We have engaged a consultant to complete the vegetation assessment work required to support the rebuild of the Mallacoota Gun Club.

We have also facilitated early rebuild supports for this project, including grant writing and project management support, funded by the CRC Support Panel. Stay tuned for updates as this project progresses.

## Support for the Digital Hub

We are pleased to support MADRA and community members in their planning for the development of a

digital hub and co-working space in Mallacoota, which was identified as a key project in the draft MADRA Economic Recovery Plan.

Along with Bushfire Recovery Victoria, we are providing advice and support towards a feasibility study for the Digital Hub. The purpose of the study is to explore the feasibility of creating a co-working space with breakout rooms, bookable meeting rooms, a digital media studio and workshop space, to encourage digital enterprise and technological accessibility in Mallacoota.

MADRA and the community members leading the project - Mary O'Malley, Meg Allen, and Kristen Rule - are to be congratulated for their enthusiasm in getting the project up and running.

## Final recovery works

Nick Dunbar, a Project Supervisor from our Projects Team, has been assigned to oversee the remaining rebuild works in the Mallacoota District, including Secret Beach access, Pittosporum Walk, Lakeside Drive culvert replacements, and the Genoa Pedestrian Bridge.

Works are likely to commence on the Secret Beach Stairs in the coming weeks. Local contractors have again been engaged to carry out re-construction works with most of the material required for the works being successfully sourced through Mallacoota suppliers.

It is expected the works will take up to eight weeks to complete and the Secret Beach access will remain closed for the duration of the works. Carparking will also be limited in the immediate area, to ensure community safety and trade and supplier access.

We look forward to progressing with this project to ensure safe beach access is available to locals and visitors as soon as possible.

Nick will also be overseeing construction of the Mallacoota Skate Park. The Sanctuary and other partners have been the drivers of this project to date and we look forward to working alongside them and the community as this exciting project develops.

## European wasps

We are aware of the increases in European wasp nests across some areas in East Gippsland.

If you have found a wasp nest and it's located on Council land, please contact us on 5153 9500 and let us know with precise detail its location and provide a contact number of a person who can locate it for the pest controller/officer.

If you have found a wasp nest and it's located on private property, it is the responsibility of the property owner to address the matter and arrange treatment.

We recommend contacting a pest controller for treatment of wasps on private property or talk to chemical suppliers in your local area if you feel comfortable treating it yourself, however, do not undertake this if you are allergic to bees or wasps. We are unable to provide chemicals to landholders for treatment.

First aid is a critical component for wasp stings, for information on treating stings see the Better Health Channel website: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/european-wasp>



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## Genoa Pedestrian Bridge works start

The Genoa community marked a significant day in its history on Friday 26 February with work starting on a new pedestrian bridge across the

Genoa River. The community worked together to ensure a design that is appropriate for the location, including an overhead steel truss structure that will be painted white to mimic the former heritage bridge.

Onsite to mark the start of work on the

transport of household water for up to 400 rural households who rely on rainwater for their in-home water supply.

This will provide rural residents hit hardest by drought conditions one delivery of 10,000 litres of household water without paying for cartage (only \$50 for the water).

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your eligibility please or apply please call Ian Harris on 0492 835 499 or email [adrabairnsdale@gmail.com](mailto:adrabairnsdale@gmail.com).



Genoa River.

The iconic heritage listed timber truss bridge was destroyed by the 2019-20 bushfires re-establishing the pedestrian link from the Genoa Wayside Stop into the township was made a priority by both Council and the Genoa community.

Annette Peisley, of the Genoa Town Committee, said work starting on the new bridge was a "wonderful celebration of everyone pulling together and helping us recover from the bushfires".

"We are very appreciative of the Council. We just can't wait for it to be finished. We're going to watch it grow ... it's just fantastic."

Funded by Council, the new \$1.5 million bridge will be 111 metres long, made from steel reinforced concrete, and will be completed prior to Christmas 2021. Council and community members have

worked together to ensure a design that is appropriate for the location, including an overhead steel truss structure that will be painted white to mimic the former heritage bridge.

"I'm so proud of the Genoa community, our contractors and everybody who has been involved. This project will join the community together and we'll have the new pedestrian bridge looking as authentic as the original soon," Cr Reeves said.

Swan Reach company Jarvis Norwood Constructions is completing the project.

Watch here to see the community mark the start of work on February 26: <https://bit.ly/2My3Se3>

## Household water offer

Applications are open now for rural landowners who have no water in their primary tanks. We have allocated funding to ADRA to arrange the

## Rebuild Support Service visits

The Rebuild Support Service (RSS) visited Mallacoota last Wednesday 10 March for a conversation about rebuilding.

Those who attended asked a lot of great questions ranging from owner builder questions to questions about BAL ratings, planning versus building permits and questions about the other services available through the RSS.

Speaker Steve Pascoe checked in with people around how they are going with rebuilding and shared his lived experiences and some key tips he learnt through his rebuilding journey.

We are committed to assisting our community in its recovery, every step of the way. Rebuilding is a big part of this, and we would like to remind residents that our Rebuild Support Service is here to help.

You can find out more about the service on our dedicated rebuilding web page <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/bushfire-rebuilding>, or by calling Council on 03 5153 9500.

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## Community facility inspections start

We have sourced \$1 million in funding from Bushfire Recovery Victoria's (BRV) Local Economic Recovery (LER) program. This was announced in 2020 although there was some delay in finalising the arrangements.

The program has been created to support the resilience and capacity of a number of community facilities in East Gippsland. This is to assist bringing communities together in recovery but also to prepare for future emergency events by updating and upgrading eligible facilities.

The program is underway and is commencing with assessment and confirmation of the facilities to be included in the program (for example, in some communities there is more than one facility and so it is necessary to determine which is most appropriate to include).

Candidate facilities will undergo inspections and a risk assessment to determine suitability for upgrade. Our Community Facilities team have also been undertaking condition assessments of several facilities to inform planning and this information will be considered. It is possible that after this preliminary work that some facilities will not be suitable for upgrade, but we will be in contact where this is the case.

There are several elements intended to be implemented at eligible facilities, including:

- Ember proofing
- Switchboard upgrades
- Resilience telecommunications including AV equipment.

We will project manage the upgrades and will be going to market for this work soon. We are prioritising the risk assessment and the availability of AV equipment noting that some Community

Recovery Committees have indicated that this would be of value for their current work.

If you have plans for work on your facility, please contact us so we can understand how it fits together. For more information contact Place Manager Eva Grunden or Project Manager Paul Oakes on 5153 9500.

## Council Plan session

More than 20 community members actively provided feedback to inform the development of the Council Plan 2021-25 at a session held in Mallacoota on 26 February (pictured below).

Cr Mark Reeves and senior Council staff attended the session to hear first-hand the ideas, vision and challenges, which will then inform Council's strategic documents.

Every four years councillors develop a Council Plan that sets the major direction for Council and every year sets an Annual Budget, with a planned out capital works program. The feedback provided in these workshops,

along with feedback collected through the recently conducted community perceptions survey, will inform the development of the Council Plan 2021-25 and will be used to review the Community Vision.

## Council newsletters

Council publishes a monthly community newsletter – My Council My Community – and it's available on our website at <https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/council/my-council-my-communitynewsletter>. You can also subscribe to receive it directly to your inbox. Content includes Council Meeting decisions, project updates, bushfire recovery information and much more. Also, for updates on general local business support, activity and news, business operators are encouraged to sign up to Council's Business Connect e-newsletter at <http://eepurl.com/gwyzLb>. Alternatively you can always email the team on [economic.development@egipps.vic.gov.au](mailto:economic.development@egipps.vic.gov.au)

