

Omeo Region Recovery Update

JULY 2022



Omeo Mountain Bike Track

We marked the official start to Stage 1 of the Omeo Mountain Bike Trails project with a sod turning at Livingstone Park on 10 June.

We are contributing \$1.52m to the project, which also received funding from the Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund (\$1.5m), and its Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program Phase 3 (\$1.506m). The Victorian Government's Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund is contributing \$1m. Stage 1 will see 56 km of the network built.

Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria Danielle Green also announced \$3.2 million

funding from the Victorian Government to deliver Stage 2 on the day. This will ensure the entire 121km network can be built. Council will contribute an additional \$1,060,000 towards Stage 2, bringing the total investment from all tiers of government to \$9.72 million.

Watch the YouTube video at: <https://bit.ly/3ypb9Sv>

Livingstone Park upgrade works

Livingstone Park is receiving some much-needed improvements to enhance the space for locals to come together, spend leisure time and rebuild community wellbeing

and resilience since the bushfires. This has been made possible with a grant to Council through the Local Economic Recovery Program for \$1.535 million to revitalise and modernise community facilities at the site. The project will increase the park's capability for recreation events with:

- increased parking and lighting,
- upgrades to walking trails,
- connecting paths to the town and caravan park,
- a more varied playground,
- a safer swimming hole, and
- expanded picnic facilities.

Due to multiple floods impacting Livingstone Park and its creek frontages, hydrological assessments of the creek features and structures were required. Further measures are needed to help protect the park's assets. Consultation is ongoing with the North East Catchment Management Authority to provide the best possible outcome for the project and the community.

We are calling for tenders for the shared pedestrian / bike bridge leading to the caravan park. We hope to award the contract in July with a view to construction later this year. The path upgrade will be completed once the bridge is installed. For more information or to view images of this project, please visit <https://bit.ly/3bxHLAs>

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Omeo Region Recovery Update

JULY 2022

The Tambo Crossing Shed is finished!

Mayor Cr Mark Reeves joined community members on 20 May to officially open the Tambo Crossing Multi-Purpose Community Facility. It was a fitting way to celebrate National Volunteer Week! Although the work was delayed, we worked closely with the Tambo Crossing Community Association to ensure a suitable facility was established. The new facility includes room for emergency vehicles, a kitchen and meeting room, and – most importantly – a fit-for-purpose asset for the Tambo Crossing community. We are delighted to have been involved in helping find a way to make the project happen; the \$426,000 project was funded by the federal and state governments through the Local Economic Recovery Program. Thank you to everyone who came to the celebration.

Budget adopted

Council adopted the 2022-23 Budget at its Council meeting on Tuesday, June 28.

In considering community feedback, the 2022-23 Budget features some changes to what was presented to the community for feedback in the draft Budget.

More than 400 community members and groups took the opportunity to provide a range of feedback on the draft. Councillors read and considered all this feedback, along with verbal feedback councillors received from residents during their day-to-day interactions.

Amendments made to the final 2022-23 Budget included an increase in the value of the Capital Works Program from \$91.4 million to \$104 million.

Mayor Cr Mark Reeves said the capital works budget was about three times larger than usual – it usually sits around \$32-\$42 million.

“It is important to note Council’s contribution to the capital works budget has not increased. All of the increase has come from our work to secure state or federal grants. These are mostly competitive grants that we have been able to attract to East Gippsland for projects that we know are a priority for the community. The grant income for our capital projects is \$53 million.

Rates and charges

The rate waiver for eligible properties where the main dwelling was destroyed or deemed uninhabitable as a result of the 2019-20 bushfires will continue for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 years. Councillors heard the feedback from the community and amended the farm rate differential discount, increasing the discount to 20%. The farm rate differential will be 80% of the general rate.

Waste levy

The \$37 levy is a direct response to a significant increase in the Victorian Government’s landfill levy that is imposed on our landfills. This is the second year that the Victorian Government has imposed such a significant increase which will increase our landfill costs by almost \$1 million. Domestic waste collection charges will remain the same as in the 2021-22 year as will our waste facility fees and charges. The cost to dispose of mattresses has decreased, to encourage people to dispose of these items responsibly. The 2022-23 Budget can be viewed on our website and at our Customer Service Centres.



Omeo Region Recovery Update

JULY 2022



Update from Helen

There are many parts to my role as Place Manager in the Omeo Region. Meeting with community and attending community group discussions is key to developing a 'community lens' so that we deliver the best outcomes for the region.

There have been many visitors to the Omeo Region with lots to do and events to celebrate. The Omeo Region Community Recovery Association's Resilience Plan is well underway, with consultant Lisa Geltz's visit on 7 June to talk with community about localised needs that will inform the plan, and the Omeo Region Health Preparedness Report (by Mercuri Health Planning Group) nearing completion.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning staff are working closely with the Fuel Management Group and recently held a workshop on reliable power and communication. The workshop was well attended by representatives of most Tambo Valley communities. During the session, members of our Emergency Management team and other presenters (Telstra, AusNet Services, solar businesses, Gippsland Power Hub) discussed off-grid and microgrid power options. The Facilities project was also discussed on the night.

Benambra Neighbourhood House and Swifts Creek Community Centre have welcomed funding from East Gippsland Community Foundation to upgrade IT equipment and improve facilities.

The North East Catchment Management Authority's Upper

Mitta Mitta Flagship project provides a collaborative forum for Council, Alpine Shire, public and private community partners to discuss a range of matters such as the Anglers Rest loop trail and walking tracks, weed control, fuel management, feral animals, Waterwatch, Landcare, cultural heritage, health and recreation programs, and illegal clearing/hunting. The Omeo Historical Society is progressing the conservancy restoration of the Justice Precinct and has had discussions with our CEO, Anthony Basford to formalise agreements.

And to top it all off, the East Gippsland Winter Festival is under way! To view the events on offer, visit egwinterfest.com.au

Rebuilding

We are continuing to support people whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the fires of 2019-20. Our Rebuild Support Service, set up in partnership with Bushfire Recovery Victoria, provide specialised advice to help streamline both planning permit application requirements and advice.

Our recent Rebuild Support Services figures indicate that across the Omeo Region (Anglers Rest, Benambra, Brookville, Cobungra, Omeo, Reedy Flat, Tambo Crossing) there have been 10 referrals to the Rebuild Support Service.

Some of the support available through the service is:

- help with planning and rebuilding – including

preparation and submission of a planning permit application

- connecting residents to organisations and services that offer specialised services such as health and wellbeing case support and financial counselling;
- copy of Title, Property Report, Preliminary Property Assessment, BAL Assessment for your property.

If you need assistance navigating planning approvals, contact the service on brss@egipps.vic.gov.au

More than two years since the fires, rebuilding remains slow. There are a range of reasons and challenges being faced by those rebuilding. Some reasons include:

- insurance that does not cover the increased building costs
- insurance that does not cover the current bushfire building standards
- limited numbers of builders/tradespeople
- increase in building costs over the last year, and
- supply chain issues reducing building material availability.

This situation presents complex issues which require more effort and attention from all levels of government and other partners. We are advocating strongly on relation to these issues with the state and federal governments. We are also convening with partners to work on finding solutions to these barriers. Recognising the ongoing impact

Omeo Region Recovery Update

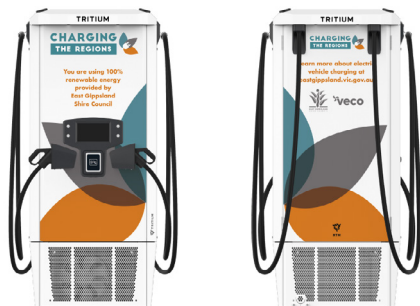
JULY 2022

on property owners affected by the Black Summer 2019-20 bushfires that have yet to rebuild, Council will extend the rate waiver period for an extra year. The waiver is available for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years to people who lost the main dwelling on the property and are yet to rebuild.

Electric vehicle charging station coming to Omeo

We are starting to roll out a network of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations for the public. We secured federal and state government funding to install seven fast chargers by June 2023.

The aim is to support the uptake of electric vehicles and encourage more tourism across our region. All of our electric vehicle charging stations will source 100% renewable electricity as part of the Victorian Energy Collaboration (more on that program at (<https://veco.org.au>))



Stage 1 is funded by the Australian Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program and will see a 50kw fast charger installed in Tongio Road on-street parking in the coming weeks.

Charging stations will also be installed in Bairnsdale, Orbost and Cann River.

For more information contact Rebecca Lamble, Sustainability Officer, on 03 5153 9500 or visit the energy page our website <https://bit.ly/3OwTtKd>



Environment Connect Winter 2022

The winter edition of Environment Connect is now available.

Environment Connect is our quarterly update about environmental projects, activities, and opportunities. Past copies are available from the website: <https://bit.ly/3R8CC2j>



Visitor Services Survey

Have your say and be part of reshaping the future of visitor services in East Gippsland.

The tourism industry has faced significant challenges over the last couple of years. Now is a good

time to review how future visitor services could look in our region.

Residents are invited to fill in a survey to help evolve our tourism service offer.

As a thank you for completing the survey, you can go into the draw to win an experience for two at the new Metung Hot Springs. Please complete the survey by 11.59 pm on 19 July at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/EGVSCCommunityStudy

Apply for our community grants now

Our next round of Community Grants are open now.

There are two categories: Community Projects, and Arts and Heritage. Grants are available to community groups, clubs, facility managers, event managers and, for some arts and heritage grants, individuals.

We are holding online sessions to help you refine your project or activity, and give you tips on writing your application.

The one-hour sessions are: Wednesday 6 July from 10.00 am and Wednesday 13 July from 6.00 pm. It is important to read the guidelines before starting your application. Please call our Community Development Officer on 03 5153 9500 if you have any questions. For more information or to register visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/grants.