

# Omeo Region Recovery Update

DECEMBER 2022

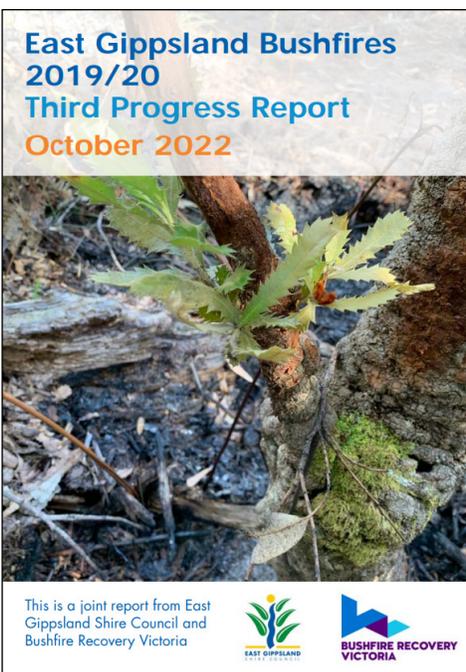


## Third Progress Report released

We are pleased to announce the East Gippsland Bushfires 2019/20 Third Progress Report is now available on our website. The Report outlines recovery efforts for community recovery committees, Council, and partner agencies (Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria (PV)). Significant progress is being made across all five recovery pillars and there have been some important milestones to celebrate in the last eighteen months; much of the damaged or destroyed infrastructure is now back in place; roadsides have been treated for emerging weeds to encourage recovery of native vegetation; and economic investment across East Gippsland with Gross Regional Product, local expenditure and visitation rates all trending-up, reflecting opportunities for future development in this area.

Recovery is different for everyone, and significant support is still required. A social recovery needs assessment undertaken by Council in partnership with ERV, health service providers and community has identified priority areas for continued support and funding. We continue to advocate strongly for funding to further support our communities' identified recovery needs.

To view the Report please



visit: [www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/bushfire-recovery-plans-and-reports](http://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/bushfire-recovery-plans-and-reports)

## Place Manager's update

This is our final Omeo Region Place Update for 2022.

Several projects across the communities in the Omeo Region have recently advanced from concept and planning to an active stage. This has taken many hours to negotiate funding, licences, organise events and meet objectives of multiple departments to achieve programs, infrastructure, or new services.

Funding to support recovery has been transferred from Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) to Council.

This transition has required changes to the way in which funding is accessed for Community Recovery Committees. Thank you to ORCRA for your patience and cooperation as we embed the new process. A comprehensive package outlining the funding, including criteria and guidelines was made available to all Community Recovery Committees across the Shire.

ORCRA recently supported funding of the following activities:

- Tambo Crossing Community Association's trivia night
- Swifts Creek Bowling Club 'Barefoot Bowls'
- Cassilis Market
- Omeo mural launch

All of these activities involved local people and were well attended and enjoyed.



Council officers Kath Smith and Helen Sheil handing out copies of the Omeo Resilience Plan at the Omeo Show.

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## The Omeo Region Resilience Plan (the Plan):

A foundational document for each community provides insight into diversity of situations, contacts, and capacity of each community (Cobungra and Anglers Rest still to be worked on). The Plan was available for discussion at the **Omeo Show** on Saturday 12 November. This was an opportunity for community groups to reflect on what they have achieved individually and collectively since the inception of ORCRA. See more at **Omeo Region | Our Recovery**.

**Anglers Rest:** The concept plan for the Anglers Rest Walking Track – network feasibility is now in the final stages. The network feasibility concept has been prepared for Parks Vic. Cultural, environmental, recreational, and economic factors underpin the process. Friends of Mitta have worked long and hard to involve Council, North East Catchment Management Authority, Parks Vic, and East Gippsland Community Foundation.

**Benambra Future Facilities:** Interviews were held with consultants to work with Benambra community to consider future use and upgrade of existing facilities in Benambra (Neighbourhood House, Recreation Reserve, Hall, CFA shed and school). Work commenced mid-November (2022) and will continue to mid-April 2023, funded through the Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) Support Catalogue.

**Benambra Neighbourhood House** is exploring the possibility

of extending the Benambra Neighbourhood House and construction of a large shed for activities and storage.

I was invited to speak alongside staff from Omeo District Health at the Seniors Lunch organised by Benambra Neighbourhood House. Council supports this event to bring people together. There was good attendance at the event held at the Golden Age Hotel.

**Ensay Recreation Reserve** has finally heard the good news that federal funding for \$2.3M to upgrade facilities at the recreation reserve has been secured. Federal member Darren Chester, Council and community groups lobbied hard to secure this funding that

were uncertain after the change of government.

**Ensay** also held their long-awaited Spanish Lunch with great weather, involvement, food, and entertainment. An occasion to catch up with neighbours, to relax and appreciate the chance to come together. Everyone was catered for with a range of choices of paella. Children and adults enjoyed Wacky Wombat workshops and performance – it was lovely to see the laughter and enjoyment this created. A fabulous flamenco guitarist and Spanish dancers set the mood. It was a well organised event, after cancellations due to COVID and floods.



The sun shone for the Spanish Lunch in Ensay.

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The Omeo Historical Society hosted a viewing of the newly completed restoration of the Omeo Justice Precinct, coinciding with the celebrations marking 150 years since the proclamation of the Omeo Shire. The restoration project was managed by Council.

## **Omeo Justice Precinct:**

The Omeo Historical Society organised a morning tea at the A.M. Pearson Reserve at the end of October to mark three events: the 150th anniversary of the Proclamation of the Omeo Shire in 1872; 50 years of the Omeo Historical Society; and viewing restorations of the Court House.

Graeme Deveson (Omeo Historical Society) ran proceedings and gave overview of the partnerships with Heritage Victoria and Council that had enabled the restoration of buildings in the reserve. Each initially contributed \$200,000 then an additional \$100,000 by Council bringing the total to \$500,000.

Jo Lyngcoln (Heritage Victoria) spoke of the significance of the Court House's architecture on a national scale. Councillor Sonia

Buckley represented Council and spoke of the significance of the precinct to the area in the past and for the future.

**Omeo Hub:** Council has supported an Omeo Region Business and Tourism initiative to establish the Omeo Hub at the Service Centre in Day Street. The Omeo Hub is in process of applying for funding to fit out the premises for a drop in with a focus on education, networking and being a link with community and agencies.

**Omeo Shire Community Access Radio (OSCAR)** successfully applied for funding from East Gippsland Community Foundation to upgrade facilities and provide training. This has been a great collaboration supported with skills, knowledge, and contacts through Australian

Business Volunteers from Canberra and locally.

**Reedy Flat:** (Hammonds Rd) pilot site will trial a Stand-Alone Power System (SAPS) by Ausnet/Mondo. Resident Sally Kendall is in discussions with Ausnet/Mondo to learn more about relevance of offer for diverse farming requirements. It is an exciting initiative being offered to several communities on end of network distribution. Access to reliable power and communication was identified as a high priority in the ORCRA Resilience Survey.

**Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve** has been successful in their grant application to Living Regional funding to enable public toilets to be part of the upgrade (\$194,000). The tender for construction work has been awarded and is due to commence on upgrading the netball courts.

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**Swifts Creek Hall** designs have been drawn up for upgrade of the kitchen and gym.

The project is awaiting information on location of existing drains to progress. Plans now completed, and tenders due to be awarded early 2023.

**Swifts Creek Futures** is the name chosen for the Swifts Creek Timber Transition Local Development Strategy. Under the auspice of the East Gippsland Shire Council a project worker has commenced work. This milestone is an important one in the Smart Specialisation approach to regional development that involves community, multiple levels of government, and tertiary education through RMIT and industry groups.

Snapshot of other activities

- Hinnomunjie Bridge restoration tender advertised
- Omeo Valley Road major rehabilitation complete
- Omeo Recreation Reserve netball and tennis court upgrade construction contract awarded and detailed design progressing
- Black Spot Bogong High Plains Road safety improvements concept design progressing and will include guard rail, dragon teeth line marking, guideposts, and signage
- Omeo Streetscape revitalisation concept design is progressing with our team preparing a brief for community consultation leading on to the conceptual design.



*Omeo Mountain Bike Trails is making good progress.*

## Omeo Mountain Bike Trails project update

While the recent rain has made for damp on-site conditions, Common Ground have still been able to make good progress and are on track to have Stage 1 'ride ready' for Easter 2023.

Stage 1 includes the easy / beginner trails commencing in Livingstone Park and an easy loop connecting to the Oriental Claims. The actual length of trail to be ready for Easter will depend on the site conditions over summer, for example significant rain events or extreme heat days.

Trail construction of Stage 2 has been awarded and the construction schedule is agreed and in place with preliminary works underway in preparation for construction commencement.

The fabrication and construction contract for the Oriental Claims Bridge has commenced with a local contractor winning the tender. This bridge will be a key element of trail XC3.



## Update from our EM team

The ORCRA Recovery Plan was submitted to the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee where it was accepted by the committee and tasks from that plan allocated to the relevant agency for actions and subsequent reporting.

A site meeting was held at Livingstone Park with all Emergency Services and other stakeholders to discuss the proposed emergency management for the mountain bike trail network. The Mountain Bike Trail construction crew also provided attendees with an update on commenced works. An online forum regarding Foot and Mouth Disease and other diseases

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currently threatening to face farmers into the future was recently held. This forum also provided opportunity for communities to test the audio-visual units installed in many community halls across the municipality which can be used in times of an emergency.

Road Supervisors have allocated roadside slashing works to contractors to ensure safety of road users by slashing roadsides, sight lines at intersections and some reserves. These works will be completed when conditions are optimal with consideration given to risk, weather conditions and ensuring no damage occurs due to bogging or wheel rutting from that machinery.

Our teams continue to inspect static water tanks, Neighbourhood Safer Places and Community Assembly Areas in preparation for the coming season. Fire Prevention inspections on private properties commenced in November, so this is a reminder to increase your property maintenance and preparedness for the summer season.

Current weather models indicate increased chances of above-average rainfall for Eastern Australia during spring and summer, bringing a feeling of relief to those in our bushfire affected areas. The Bureau of Meteorology says this La Niña event's peak during spring will return to neutral conditions early in 2023. Our Emergency Management team are actively monitoring flooding events across the border and local river

catchment levels.

We are still awaiting the outcome of a funding application to install generators at some of the known Community Assembly Areas as identified under their Local Incident Management Plan. The installation of these generators will ensure greater resilience for communities when these facilities can provide generated power, communications, minimal protection, and social connectedness in times of an emergency.

## Omeo electric vehicle charging station

The two '90-minute EV only' carparks on Tongio Road have been installed and should be operational before Christmas. Our contractors are just waiting on the final electrical inspections by AusNet. We are dependent on the AusNet timeframes.

Electric vehicle charging stations require access to three-phase power, so we have worked with AusNet to allow for a new electrical point of supply. As electric vehicles become more popular in Australia, there is a need to cater for residents and visitors to charge their cars.

The EV charger in Omeo is a 50kW DC charger, where the average charge time will be approximately 30 minutes (although between 5 to 90 minutes is likely depending on the size of the car battery and how flat it is).

These new EV chargers will source 100% renewable electricity, as part of the Victorian Energy

Collaboration (or VECO). EV car users will be able to pay to charge their vehicle via downloading the ChargeFox app on their smartphone.

Project updates and opportunities for feedback will be provided on the Your Say page: [yoursay.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/electric-vehicle-charging-station](https://yoursay.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/electric-vehicle-charging-station).



The two '90-minute EV only' carparks installed on Tongio Road, Omeo.



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## Rural Land Use and Housing and Settlement

Our community is continually changing. Population growth, an ageing population, risks from natural hazards and changes to our economy present challenges and opportunities. Council is progressing two important strategies and inviting community feedback to assist in shaping a prosperous and sustainable future.

Final draft of the **Rural Land Use Strategy**, a framework that supports the farming sector, promotes opportunities for rural tourism and protects our rural environment: **Rural Land Use Strategy - Final Draft | Your Say East Gippsland**

**The Housing and Settlement Strategy** guides the location of future housing and settlement growth to 2041. A discussion paper outlines the key principles and will assist in the first step in the development of the strategy. To complete the feedback form and be part of shaping the sustainable growth of towns in East Gippsland visit: **Housing and Settlement Strategy - Discussion Paper | Your Say East Gippsland**

The aim of the two strategies is to balance the need for housing and the sustainable growth of our towns and settlements with the need to protect rural areas and the natural environment.

Feedback will be open until 3 February 2023 and documents can be viewed on the Council website or at

any of our Customer Service Centres.

## Youth Leadership 2023 series announced

The East Gippsland Community Foundation, in partnership with TAFE Gippsland, will provide an East Gippsland Youth Leadership Series in 2023. Designed for new and emerging youth leaders in the 16–24-year age group, this exciting series will provide young people with the opportunity to explore their leadership potential. Applicants will be sourced from across the East Gippsland region, with priority given to the fire-impacted communities of the 2019/2020 Black Summer Fires. The series will run from February to October 2023 and will include three face-to-face sessions in Bairnsdale, 10 online workshops and a graduation ceremony in November. For further information visit **2023 Youth Leadership Series - TAFE Gippsland**.

## Continued funding to support recovery

\$1.1M in funding has been allocated to Council to support local CRCs and representative groups involved in the planning or delivery of community-led recovery initiatives and priority projects following the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires. This funding replaces the ERV managed funding process for CRCs. Council has developed a more flexible process informed by lessons learnt and feedback from CRC representatives.

The new funding guidelines include increased flexibility on eligible expenses and Council Place Managers will work closely with CRCs to plan for expenditure of the funds as required. We thank the CRCs for their patience and support as we navigate the new process together. Funding is initially through to 30 June 2023 with potential for an extension.

## Changes to recovery communications

The Omeo Region recovery update has been available to community from December 2020 following the 2019/20 bushfires. It's contained articles of local information and updates on recovery projects, infrastructure, events, and relevant shire-wide information.

From January, recovery-specific information will be available through community newsletters and social media, My Council My Community online monthly newsletter, and Council's Facebook page.

We acknowledge that recovery is a long-term process, and we will continue to support our communities throughout their recovery.

## My Council, My Community

The monthly My Council, My Community newsletter is packed full of news about Council's projects, services, major decisions, open consultations and more. To sign-up to receive the newsletter automatically, please visit **the Newsletter here**.