

# COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN ACTION

## DRIVING BUSHFIRE RECOVERY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



### CASE STUDY | CALLIGNEE AND TRARALGON SOUTH EMERGENCY COMMITTEE



Six months after the 2009 fires the landscape was bleak, twelve years later life has returned.

### Effective communication driving local change

By taking a community driven approach and producing locally relevant information that is engaging and easy to understand, the Callignee and Traralgon South Emergency Committee is driving real change at the local level.

The Callignee and Traralgon South Emergency Committee is a community based emergency management group. Lead by passionate volunteers, the group is focused on raising community awareness about the risk of emergency events such as bushfires and floods and how to prepare and respond in the case of an emergency. The group is also proactive in facilitating recovery after an event and engaging residents to have a say and get involved.

The district has an extensive history of catastrophic fire events. It was devastated in the fires of 1898, 1939 and 1944. In 2009, 11 people died and more than 145 houses were destroyed. The recent 2019-2020 black summer bushfires also impacted the district.

Group activities focus on local community communication with an emphasis on personal responsibility. Activities include:

- An annual preparedness brochure distributed to all households.
- Publication of regular notes and posts identifying key activities to prepare for the season ahead.
- A Group Facebook page

Useful resources and information about bushfire preparedness, extreme weather tips and local incidents are included. Opportunities to be involved in planning and recovery processes are also presented.

Easy to understand pictures, diagrams and checklists are included. Creative approaches simplify messages for local audiences. For example, the publication of a Koala comic drawn by Herald Sun cartoonist Mark Knight.

This place-based, accessible approach assists take up and traction of messages in the community.

This case study series demonstrates the central role of community organisations as champions of place-based community led bushfire recovery.

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“Community safety advice is not always welcomed by some people. As one lady said ‘we don’t want to hear what we don’t want to know!’ But it is essential to be factual before an event if we are going to minimise physical injuries and the mental health trauma of the experience.”

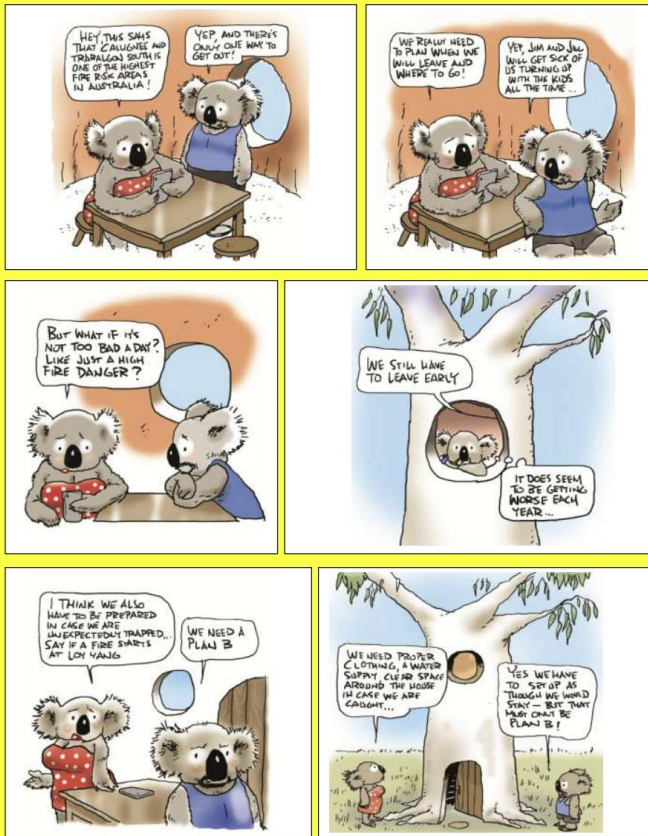
Group member

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### PROJECT PARTNERS

- Country Fire Authority
- Vic State Emergency Service
- Latrobe City Council

## What Will The Koala's Do In Summer?



Koala cartoons drawn by Herald Sun cartoonist Mark Knight

## Towards a Resilient Recovery

The group is currently preparing a framework developed from Dr Rob Gordon's work which describes the phases a community goes through as it recovers.

### Five inter-related functions of recovery:

1. The social environment
2. The agricultural environment
3. The built environment
4. The natural environment
5. The economic environment

Community consultation is a key part of this process to ensure everyone is involved and better informed about the nature of recovery. It will also raise awareness of the complex social systems that underpin personal health. With this knowledge, local residents can identify what's important to the community prior to an emergency event. This will also help formulate a Community Recovery Plan going forward.

### Key Outcomes

- Increased community awareness of bushfire danger and how to prepare and respond in case of an emergency.
- Improved community knowledge and capacity in what to do, who to contact and where to go in an emergency.
- Increased community ownership and decision making.
- Well targeted, relevant and easy to understand messages.
- Improved neighbourhood relationships and ability to look out for and assist one another.
- Improved community engagement and participation in recovery processes and broader agency projects and networks.

### Key Learnings

- For success, a passionate team of at least 2-3 people dedicated to the hard decisions which come with community safety helps keep up momentum.
- Messaging needs to be positive - try to have 'what to do' and not make it too frightening.
- People do take on the messages, but it is hard to quantify. The evidence is in looking around the district to see if preparation is happening.
- For success, have an annual plan noting when items are to be completed. This can then be monitored during meetings (best) or over email or zoom.

For more information contact [cats.emergency.committee@gmail.com](mailto:cats.emergency.committee@gmail.com)

For additional resources visit the [VCOSS Bushfire Recovery Project](#)



[Video Clip: We are not staying](#)



The group is now on [face book](#) posting regular posts to the community

Example brochures:

- [Summer's Coming + Ready or not - 2020 Summer brochure](#)
- [2020 Season Brochure](#)