

Mirboo North Community Recovery Working Group

Community Recovery Story from the February 2024 Storm Event

OUR ENVIRONMENT



CLEAN-UP



REJUVENATION



WILDLIFE

OUR ECONOMY



FUTURE PLANNING



TOURISM



TOWNSHIP

OUR PEOPLE



SUPPORT



CONNECTION



COMMUNICATION

OUR FACILITIES



BUILDINGS



ROADSIDES



ENTRANCES

February 13th Storm and Power Outage Event

Thunderstorms across Victoria on Tuesday 13 February 2024 produced damaging winds in many areas. The fast-moving storms intensified as they crossed West and South Gippsland later in the afternoon, resulting in significant damage in Mirboo North. Sadly one person lost their life.

Impacts included building damage, a significant number of trees down on private property, roads and public land, and road closures caused by tree fall. Private property damage in and around Mirboo North was significant with 27 homes damaged and uninhabitable, with 4 beyond repair.

Damage to community assets including Mirboo North Golf Course, Mirboo North Swimming Pool, Baths Road Reserve, Baromi Park, Walter J Tuck Recreation Reserve including clubrooms and associated buildings, Mirboo North Scout Hall, Grand Ridge Rail Trail, Lyrebird Walk and other public land around Mirboo North managed by DEECA.

Clean up was a major issue with 105 properties registered with Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) clean-up program for demolition or hazardous tree removal. There were 3 rounds of kerbside clean up arranged by Emergency Recovery Victoria in Mirboo North focusing on green waste and hard rubbish collection. Stockpiled green waste was reused where appropriate and turned into products like firewood and mulch with profits generated from the sale of these products to be reinvested in the community through the Mirboo North and District Community Foundation.

The Mirboo North Storm Cell Volunteers identified work relating to clean up of fallen timber on private property around Mirboo North and District. The majority of these jobs related to work that required a volunteer workforce, heavy machinery and arborists due to the size and complexity of the clean-up requirements. They recorded completion of around 300 jobs with wood being left for residents to utilise, being removed by contractors, and some being set aside for future milling or being deposited at the Mirboo North Transfer Station.

Agriculture Victoria data identified that 199 rural properties were impacted which included 30 hectares of hardwood plantation recorded as being lost along with 614 Km of fencing (caused by windfallen trees).

Mirboo North Community Recovery Working Group & Recovery principles

The Mirboo North Community Recovery Working Group was established in April 2024 to ensure a community-led recovery approach that would compliment municipal and state recovery processes. A successful recovery journey means communities identify their own needs, make decisions about their recovery priorities and influence community planning. This ensures that the recovery process is matched to local community needs. A diverse group of community leaders representing impacted community groups was formed to support a community-led approach to recovery planning including:

- Bernadine Brullo (Storm Cell Volunteers)
- Vaya Dauphin (MNSC Principal)
- Wayne Roberts (MN Rec Reserve President)
- Jess Healey (Storm Cell Volunteers)
- Kelly McCarthy (MCDI President)
- Doug Parke (CFA Treasurer)
- Ruth Rogan (Community Foundation)
- Andy McCarthy (Energy)
- Belinda Seabrook (Reverend at St. Mary's)
- Anne Marie Dieperink (Community Bank)
- Marg Thomas (Environment / Preserve Our Forests).

The Group can be contacted by emailing: recovery@southgippsland.vic.gov.au

The following principles were identified by the group to guide its decision making and the work of others.

Overarching principle

Empowerment and participation

- Involve community members in the recovery process and ensure a community-led process
- Encourage community-led decision making to prioritise needs and solutions

Supporting principles

Local knowledge and resources

- Utilise local expertise and skills in the community
- Invest in local capacity to support recovery efforts

Sustainability and resilience

- Focus on long term recovery and resilience
- Integrate risk reduction and preparedness to mitigate future disasters

Community cohesion

- Foster social cohesion and networks within the community

Community recovery – priorities and unmet needs

Significant local community effort has been invested into sustaining recovery-related activities in the months after the incident in February 2024.

The Mirboo North Community Recovery Working Group has completed extensive community consultation and engagement which has been summarised below in this document. This process identified priorities that require urgent and ongoing attention, additional investment, and flexible funding under community control included under the following headings:

- Our Environment
- Our Economy
- Our People
- Our Facilities

These generally align with the State Emergency Management Plan recovery environments, Natural, Economic, Social and Built. This plan aims to outline the community recovery priorities and recognise actions and activities that meet these identified community needs. Where activities have been completed or are currently planned, this information has also been included in this document.

Due to the significance of the impacts on the Natural Environment a working group has been set up including members of the Mirboo North Community Recovery Working Group, DEECA, Friends of Baths Road and local residents and ecologists.

Critical success factors

The following critical success factors for the recovery phase have been identified by the Mirboo North Recovery Working Group as advocacy priorities.

- Appointment of a Community Recovery Officer to support ongoing Community Recovery activities
- Flexible funding under the direction of the Community Recovery Working Group to commission recovery-related activities (built, social, natural, and economic)
- Baths Road Reserve to be made safe and an agreed rehabilitation plan developed
- Appropriate financial and insurance support and advice to be available for affected community members
- Appropriate social and mental health support services to be available for affected individuals
- The Mirboo North Swimming Pool to be open for the summer season
- The Mirboo North Golf Course to be fully open for play
- Impact assessment and rehabilitation principles for the storm-affected natural environment on DEECA managed public land to be developed
- Energy and communications network resilience contingencies identified

The Mirboo North Community Recovery Working Group will continue to advocate for these critical success factors as a Working Group and through Council's MRM to State Government and relief and recovery agencies to ensure a sufficient level of recovery planning is completed and resources are allocated to February Storm event for the implementation of community identified and led recovery actions and activities.

This document will be updated quarterly by the Community Recovery Working Group and displayed in locations around Mirboo North' and updates provided in the Mirboo North Times as required.

Community Recovery Story from the February 2024 Storm Event

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
OUR ENVIRONMENT

JANUARY 2025



CLEAN-UP

- Clean up damaged trees, hangers, stumps & debris
- Ensure trees are below power lines
- Weeding and wood removal
- Baths Road Reserve & Rail Trail support
- Private property support for clean up
- Agricultural/farm fencing support
- Burn off debris safely



REJUVENATION

- Community Garden
- Revegetation & replanting across our community and in our reserves and forests to encourage native species
- Reuse fallen timber for local projects
- Information in relation to native species & bushwalks
- Private property support in replanting
- Community working bees
- Encourage wildlife corridors
- Connecting to Country



WILDLIFE

- Bird & possum boxes
- Talks from wildlife carers
- Encourage wildlife, gardens & plants to attract birds & insects
- Replant native species to support our koalas

COMPLETED

- Agencies and Council supported the removal of fallen trees and roadside clean-up in emergency response.
- 300 plus private properties worked on by Storm Cell Volunteers
- BlazeAid supported farm fencing work and advocacy for support to farmers
- Emergency Recovery Vic Hazardous Tree Program and Disaster Relief Australia for private property clean up
- Disaster waste amnesty
- Rail Trail resurfacing works completed
- Council made several tracks safe in Baths Road Reserve & CFA complete fire prevention works in the reserve

COMPLETED

- 'Plant Hope Project' - A ministry of St Mary's Anglican Church initiative providing free donated locally sourced plants to community members for the restoration of private gardens.
- Local Community Information Night in May 2024 - organised by Preserve Our Forests Mirboo North & Mardan Mirboo North Landcare
- Community Foundation held Plants and Planting day in June 2024 with free plants
- The Mirboo North Timber Reclamation Project Team formed
- A community planting day was held by the Friends of the Baths Road Reserve

COMPLETED

- Habitat nesting boxes from Boo Bird Boxes have been safely installed at the Golf Course and Baromi Park by arborists under ERV's Hazardous Tree Program, Funded by the Community Bank Mirboo North and District and made by the Traralgon Men's Shed
- Boxes installed at Baths Road Reserve by the community, for microbats, sugar gliders, rosellas & kookaburras
- Guided Walk - Preserve Our Forests Mirboo North & district
- School replanting supported by Preserve Our Forests
- Lyrebird Walk rehabilitated & opened

UPCOMING

- DEECA planned works in Baths Road Reserve to reduce coarse woody debris and support reserve's natural recovery
- DEECA planning for fire reduction works and ongoing management on other public land in and around Mirboo North ongoing with implementation commencing in Feb. 2025

UPCOMING

- Mirboo North Timber Reclamation Project is preparing for processing and distribution of windfallen timber
- Healing in our Environment Program developed that includes information session, knowledge sharing, working bees and replanting on private and public land. A number of events have already been held and more are coming in 2025.
- Outside of recovery, a new group is in formation to support a community garden.

UPCOMING

- Both the Healing in Our Environment Program and the Mirboo North Timber Reclamation Project will have supportive aspects for our local wildlife
- Development of a revegetation plan for the Mirboo North Golf Course and supports identified for replanting.
- DEECA completing planning for works on other public land in and around Mirboo North.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
OUR ECONOMY



FUTURE PLANNING

- Importance of having emergency point for all to meet, with generator, battery back-up & storage
- Access to communications
- Improved reception to connect to Vic Emergency App, awareness of updates
- Disaster preparedness planning
- Mirboo North weather station, to provide accurate weather information



TOURISM

- Lights across the main street, decorations, new signage to encourage walks & overall tourist attraction
- Decorate shops & township to bring joy to all & attract tourists to visit
- Encourage overall tourism
- Marketing to reconnect tourism to our community



TOWNSHIP

- Encourage local shopping
- Support local community organisations
- More community grants to get back on our feet
- Small business supports being communicated to all

COMPLETED

- Successfully advocated for Energy Resilience Funding for community hub
- Chainsaw Safety course organised by Gippsland Community Leadership Program and funded by TAFE Gippsland,
- Council and MCDI supporting local businesses to access energy resilience grants from Ausnet

COMPLETED

- Mirboo North Winterfest received recovery funding and attracted locals and tourists to the area
- Promotion of local events across all of our local communities
- Community Recovery grant from Foundation for Christmas decorations on Ridgway - Jingle in the Boo.

COMPLETED

- Event funding support
- Small Business Mentoring Service
- Rural Financial Counselling Services
- ‘Parma for a Farmer’ event held in Mirboo North by Shire and griculture Victoria (Ag Vic)
- Ag Vic- Farm Business Resilience Program

UPCOMING

- Community Energy Resilience Project is underway to develop Co-space as an ‘off grid’ space, which will have power and communications (Starlink Feb) during power outage and emergencies.
- MCDI received Ausnet grant to support local businesses in the main street improve power resilience
- Storm Cell Volunteers documenting their operational process and a ‘grab bag’ of information for future
- Insurance Cover, Community First Aid and Emergency Preparedness sessions planned in near future as well as a review of township planning info
- Community Bank in discussions with Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) in relation to increased capacity in Gippsland

UPCOMING

- Future events planned to continue encouraging tourism to our community
- Continued marketing to promote upcoming local events
- MCDI are working on new town signage

UPCOMING

- Range of Community Recovery Grants remain available from the Community Foundation. Call in to Co-space.
- MCDI has received an Ausnet grant to support local businesses in the main street improve power resilience

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
OUR PEOPLE



SUPPORT

Legal assistance for insurance and any legal issues

Mental health support, access & training. More awareness for all ages

Awareness & support meetings

Programs to support children and young people after an emergency



CONNECTION

Connection to Country & smoking ceremony

Art events, support artists & musicians to provide inspiration and therapy for the community

Honouring our Volunteers, collect community stories and experiences

Activities and events to build reconnection and enjoyment



COMMUNICATION

Regular communication with the community on updates and supports available

Our schools, businesses and community to be involved in communications

Communication to farmers of available supports

COMPLETED

Free local walk in access to counsellors and psychologists from Feb - April by Gippsland Southern Health and Morwell Mental Health and Wellbeing Local

Free legal outreach at Co-space from April to December by Gippsland Community Legal Service and Victorian Legal Aid

Recovery Support and Case Management services put in place by ERV in mid-April 2024 and will run to 2025

Community Disaster Recovery Info sessions by Rob Gordon, psychologist in May and November 2024

Community Mental Health First Aid training provided and informal pastoral support through 'Plant Hope Project'

Support to families in crisis 'Hope and Help'- by Equip and other local churches assist with food & emergency relief. Community Bank Mirboo North and District fund over 100K of recovery projects

Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) provide funding to 80 impacted families & Salvation Army provide funding to most impacted families

COMPLETED

Many events have been brought together by community organisations and agencies to provide connection and support including open mic, live music, plants and planting, information on replanting etc

Volunteers Thank You Event held in July

Mirboo North Winterfest held in August, including Forest Ceremony and fallen timber recovery sculpture to be installed along the rail trail entrance

'New Season, New Hope' - A Christian community-based service of thanksgiving and hope. The replanting of a significant tree in Baromi Park in collaboration with the South Gippsland Shire Council

Growing Happiness Garden with the 1st Mirboo North Cub Scout Group

BooFIIT Inc Community Wellness Initiative: Healing Together

Community Bank Mirboo North and District Time Out for Well Being Workshop

COMPLETED

Ongoing Storm Recovery Updates provided to the community fortnightly. Can access through the notice board, Library, Co-Space, Medical Centre, social media and on South Gippsland Shire Council website.

Recovery updates set out in column in each issue of Mirboo North Times.

Recovery updates periodically go in school newsletters

Services and Agencies attending Recovery Centre at Mirboo North & District Community Foundation two days per week - Tuesday & Thursday 10am-3pm staffed by South Gippsland Shire Council

DEECA Network Outage Review sessions in March and July

Community Recovery Working Group' and Natural Environment sub-working group continue to work with community stakeholders to support communication and engagement around ongoing recovery projects, e.g. Healing in our Environment Program, DEECA public land clean up

UPCOMING

Stormbirds program to be implemented in local schools in 2025

Community Bank & Foundation offer half-price pool season passes to Mirboo North residents and free entry to those most impacted

12-month anniversary events planned to recognise impacts of storm and continue to support community recovery

UPCOMING

Audio files, videos and stories of lived experience are being collected. Call in to Co-space to get involved.

Connection, support and events continuing through Healing in Our Environment Project

Calendar of free Recovery activities for Feb / March including Youth Council disco for young people in Mirboo North during February

UPCOMING

Free Recovery Event Calendar produced and will continue to be updated.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
OUR FACILITIES



BUILDINGS

Help the Golf Club to reopen

Reopen the Pool for summer

Community building access for recovery activities

Rebuilding assistance for private properties



ROADSIDES

Clean up dangerous trees and green waste from our roadsides

Removal of dead standing & snapped trees on roadsides

Removal of hangers near roadsides

Replanting along roadsides



ENTRANCES

Road signage at Dickies Hill Road

Entrance roads into Mirboo North need clean up support

Signage at entrance from Leongatha

Consideration of new signage

Replanting along our entrances

COMPLETED

Golf Club re-opened in June 2024 thanks to volunteers' efforts with support from ERV and Disaster Relief Australia

Swimming Pool repairs completed; facility reopened in December 2024

DFFH & GERF provided financial support grants to uninsured property owners with financial need.

Repairs completed at the Scout Hall Pony Club, A&P Shed and the Cricket Club

ERV Demolition Program supported demolition of uninsured properties

COMPLETED

Response Agencies and Council supported the removal of fallen trees, hangers and roadside clean-up in emergency response

Golf Club works completed thanks to volunteers' efforts with support from ERV and Disaster Relief Australia support roadside clean up

COMPLETED

Department of Transport and Planning P and Council have replaced damaged road signs

UPCOMING

Council & Case Managers supporting ongoing planning and building permits

Community Energy Resilience Project is underway to develop Co-space as an 'off grid' space with power and communications (Starlink February 2025) for use during power outage and emergencies

UPCOMING

Continued discussions with Council and the Department of Transport and Planning in relation to roadside trees, including dead standing and snapped trees and replanting options

DEECA planning for fire reduction works and on-going management on public land on Thorpdale Road.

UPCOMING

MCDI are working on new town signage.

Discussion with Council on options for replanting town entrances within 60km zone.

COMMUNITY IDEAS BANK

Upgrade to Baromi Centre

BMX Track

Shelter in parks and along rail trail

Memorial rotunda

Storm proof community buildings

Motorcycle museum

ACCRONYMS

MCDI – Mirboo North Development Incorporated

DFFH – Dept. Health & Human Services

DEECA – Dept. Energy, Environment & Climate Change