

Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery **Group- Weekly Bulletin No. 6**

Thursday 18th January, 2007

Gippsland Towns Come Together Through Community Events

Businesses in the small Gippsland tourism town of Yarragon will come together this weekend (January 20th and 21st) to support the Regional Bushfire Recovery Effort. Traders will be donating 10% of turnover generated across the weekend to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund. They are optimistic that if people come to Yarragon and support the initiative that they can raise more than \$10,000.

The two day community event will feature live music, boutique shopping, a display of hot rods and other collectable cars, local tourism ambassadors distributing information on the great experiences available in the region and plenty of atmosphere.

Victorian individuals and businesses are encouraged to support those who have lost homes and belongings by making a donation by post or at any National Australia Bank. Cheque donations can be posted to PO Box 508, Traralgon, 3844.

Cowwarr Celebrates its CFA Heroes at the Cutters Cup

Saturday 27th January will see the running of the Cutters Cup in Cowwarr. The event will feature ride-on lawn mower races and ample community atmosphere, with all proceeds from the day to go to the Cowwarr CFA. This event will be one of several hosted by the town as they recover from the recent bushfires.

An Evening on the Gabbie Green on Australia Day

'An evening on the Gabbie Green' is a combined activity by the Lions Club of Toongabbie and the Rotary Club of Hazelwood with afternoon and evening of activities from 3.30pm till 9.00pm at Toongabbie Village Green. There will be entertainment for all ages, sausage sizzle, Devonshire teas and raffle drawn on the day. Proceeds from the day will go to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund.

Walhalla Photo Exhibition

The Walhalla community is planning a photo exhibit of the recent fire around Walhalla. The exhibition will be held in the Mechanics Institute Hall over the Australia Day weekend. They are seeking support from members of the public and firefighters who have taken photos and would be happy to make them available.

Please contact Brian Brewer c/o Walhalla Post Office or phone 5165 6250. Proceeds from the gold coin entry will be donated to the local fire brigade

Golden Beach 49th Annual Surf Fishing Competition

Golden Beach will host their 49th Annual Surf Fishing Competition this Australia Day long weekend. Fishermen can weigh in from midnight on January 26th and the event will carry through until Sunday 28th January. Competitors will have the chance to compete in numerous categories for holidays, camping gear and other great prizes. The event will include a craft and produce market from 8am-12pm and a Twilight Music Festival from 7pm-11pm on the 27th.

Visit www.ninetymilebeach.com or contact 5146 3188/ 5146 3210 for more information.

Community Cabinet to Visit Gippsland

Next Monday and Tuesday Cabinet members will visit Gippsland to talk to Local Government and the business community. This Community Cabinet meeting was called partly in response to the challenges Gippsland is facing as a result of the fires.

It is an opportunity to send a clear and positive message about the needs of the tourism industry in the response and recovery process.

The tourism sector has a number of representatives attending the round table. If there are any issues you would like raised please contact Jenny Brown on 5142 3462

Field Trips

In the past week, GTRRG members and Local Government officials visited Dargo, Licola and Omeo to meet with local tourism operators. These visits were a great opportunity for the delegation to see first hand the issues these areas are facing, as well as to meet local operators and discuss the way forward towards recovery.

Service Clubs Encouraged to Visit Gippsland's High Country

In the past week, letters have been sent to Rotary and Lion's Club Presidents throughout Gippsland inviting their support for the bushfire recovery process.

Groups were encouraged to support the recovery effort by considering the High Country communities of Walhalla, Omeo and Dargo for their upcoming club functions, excursions and meetings.

Parks Victoria Licensed Tour Operators to Assist Recovery

Parks Victoria has given their fire-affected Licensed Tour Operators the opportunity to participate in their fire recovery program. This

program will allow Licensed Tour Operators to actively engage with Parks Victoria in damage assessments and location work.

This will assist these operators in getting back on track, as well as providing an interim income. For further information about the program, or to apply, contact Parks Victoria on 13 19 63.

Media/ Public Relations

GTRRG has continued to create positive media coverage for the region in partnership with industry in the past week, particularly in relation to events taking place leading up to and during the Australia Day long weekend.

We have been inspired by the 'Good news' and recovery stories that have been coming through, and more would be most welcome! Please forward these to: jennybr@wellington.vic.gov.au.

The need for a strong and unified response to bushfires is critical. If you are contacted directly by the media regarding the impact of the bushfires, please refer them to Chris Buckingham on 0429 869 638.

Bushfire Updates

The ABC is the best source of up to date information about the fire situation, stay tuned to ABC radio on the following frequencies:

Area:	Frequency:
Melbourne and Surrounds	774am
Latrobe Valley	100.7fm
Sale	100.7fm / 828 am
Orbost	97.1fm
Omeo	720am
Cann River	106.1fm
Mallacoota	104.9fm

Support Services for operators

If things are getting you down and you need someone to talk to, call:

LIFELINE GIPPSLAND 24hr telephone counseling 13 1114

To access business planning support and advice through State Government please contact **Business Line 13 2215**

Operators encouraged to contact Centrelink for Grant Advice

Tourism operators requiring financial assistance may be eligible for grants through Centrelink. All interested operators are encouraged to contact Centrelink on 180 2233 or visit www.centrelink.gov.au for further information.

The **Department of Human Services** has further information on grants, based on eligibility, to assist fire affected businesses, farms and non-for profit organizations. To be eligible, applicants must have suffered direct damage as a result of the bushfires, be unable to affect the necessary repairs from their own resources and have exhausted alternative sources of assistance. **Please visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency for details.**

East Gippsland Bushfire Information Line

East Gippsland Shire Council has established the Bushfire Recovery Information Hotline. People requiring further information within the Shire are encouraged to contact 1800 100 298 (8am-8pm daily) or for urgent enquiries outside these times to phone 0427 950 039.

Ongoing Communication with Industry

The GTRRG is committed to working with the tourism industry to provide a unified and effective regional response and recovery process.

If you are able to assist with reliable and regular information about how the fires have (or have not) affected your business, please contact your Local Government Tourism Manager or Visitor Information Centre. The data gathered will assist in guiding the recovery process

If you want more information on the Response and Recovery effort please go to the dedicated tourism industry website:
www.gippslandtourism.net.au

People looking for inspirational experiences in Gippsland can go to:
www.destinationgippsland.com.au and www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

The Last Word...

GTRRG members have visited Omeo, Licola, Walhalla and Dargo over the last ten days. Despite the hardship experienced by operators in these towns, their sense of resilience and quiet resolution has been inspirational.

It is now day 50 since the fires began, yet people continue to inspire and amaze us with their determination.

Let it rain.

Chris Buckingham

Convenor, Gippsland Tourism Response & Recovery Group

General Manager, Gippsland Tourism

Chairperson, Destination Gippsland Inc

0429 869 638

www.destinationgippsland.com.au

For information on the Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group and industry information please go to

www.gippslandtourism.net.au