

# The road to recovery for Murrindindi

Nearly 12 months after the tragic Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria's Murrindindi Shire is determinedly continuing to tackle the many challenges that remain to rebuild its communities, writes the shire's Mayor, **LYN GUNTER**.

Black Saturday was a life-changing day for everyone, especially the communities within the Murrindindi Shire.

The loss of families and friends was immeasurable, with the memories of those we lost staying with us forever. Through all of this the community spirit has been incredible.

The determination and courage of many has provided all of us with the strength to go about our daily business, albeit at times dragging our feet, but we are enduring.

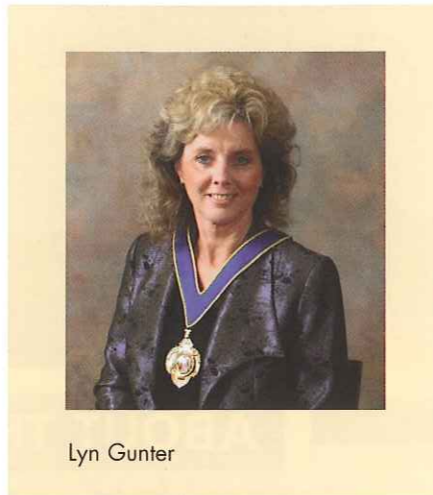
There is still so much that needs to be done.

We are committed to rebuilding homes and the communities, which will be recreated from the past, with looks of the future.

There has been tremendous help and support from numerous government agencies and departments and of course the Australian community as a whole.

This has enabled us to maintain regular services and day-to-day functions of council throughout these trying times.

The Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority (VBRRA) was appointed to assist the recovery process and council is working in partnership with Christine's Nixon's team.



Lyn Gunter

A committee has been set up under Section 86 of the *Local Government Act* with council delegating decision-making powers to enable an effective quick response to recovery and rebuilding issues.

Both VBRRA and council recognise the importance of community engagement and have set up six Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) whose primary role is to represent the views of the community in an advisory capacity, identifying issues and projects for the re-building.

To assist community-led processes we have also appointed five Community Development Officers.

Over the next 18 months they will be playing a pivotal role in supporting action on community priorities and projects.

Funding for the team has been provided by the Department of Human Services.

With funding from Regional Development Victoria, council has appointed two highly skilled Business Recovery officers to assist in the important role of Business Recovery as the economy of our communities and shire is a vitally important component in our short and long-term recovery.

Temporary villages have been set up in Flowerdale, Kinglake and Marysville and currently house 309 residents.

These villages will help our communities stay connected while they undertake the re-building of their homes.

It is great to see re-building activity happening across the shire.

*continued over page...*

## Murrindindi Shire's bushfire tragedy

**Amount of land within the Shire of Murrindindi that was burnt:** 40% - 1539 square km.

**Number of lives lost in the shire:** 106

**The number of houses destroyed in the shire:** 1397

**The length of fencing that was destroyed:** 3533 km (equivalent to a straight line from the Victorian town of Alexandra to Perth)

**The community and council facilities that were destroyed:** 5 community halls, 3 kindergartens, 2 primary schools, 1 police station, 3 Maternal & Child Health Centres, 1 retirement village, 1 caravan park, 1 child care centre and 1 transfer station/depot.



'Sunrise' on Channel 7 was in Marysville on November 2 to catch up with the locals and how they are going about rebuilding. Cr Lyn Gunter closed the show with a thanks to all of Australia for their assistance and support. Photo courtesy Graeme Haycraft

## Governance panel to help SA councils

Dear Editor,

In a first for local government in South Australia the Local Government Association recently appointed a Governance Panel – a new independent resource for councils to use to assist them address complaints about the conduct of Council Members

These issues include where a councillor is perceived to be acting outside the spirit of the *Local Government Act 1999*, or in a manner which is inconsistent with a council's Code of Conduct.

The six-member panel, with well-respected legal practitioner Kym Kelly as Chairperson, will not address allegations of fraud or corruption, which will continue to be referred to the Anti-Corruption Branch of the South Australian Police.

The initiative of the panel, instigated by local government for local government, is to provide an independent mechanism to assist councils to manage Council Members' Code of Conduct issues.

Over the past couple of years the Local Government Association has conducted extensive consultation with the local government sector, the Minister for

*continued from previous page...*

While legislation still requires residents to apply for a number of permits, we have made every endeavour to remove as much red tape as possible to speed up the processing time.

The resilience, courage and determination shown by the Murrindindi Shire communities is inspirational and we extend our sincere thanks to the emergency services, volunteer groups, local governments and all those who have and are assisting us through this difficult time.

We have already achieved a great deal but the job is far from over.

As we move forward, there are new challenges to be faced, but we face them together, knowing that through partnerships and with the strength and courage of all, we will succeed in rebuilding a new life for all.

**- At time of press, Cr Gunter had just announced that she intended to shortly step down from her position on Murrindindi Shire Council, but would continue to assist the community's recovery efforts.**

## Editorial Feedback

*Councillor Magazine* has established a **Letters to the Editor** column to foster lively debate amongst councillors about issues raised in the magazine – or any other local government matters. If you want to make a contribution to the next issue of *Councillor*, please email your letter to the Editor, Ben Hutchison, at [ben.hutchison@halledit.com.au](mailto:ben.hutchison@halledit.com.au)

State/Local Government Relations and other stakeholders to gauge the extent of support for an Independent Governance Panel for Local Government.

The Governance Panel has an advisory role only, and will prepare a report and recommendations on the appropriate action the council should take in response to the complaint, for the council's consideration.

This will further ensure that council business is conducted under the best possible governance conditions, which will continue to assure our communities that council decisions are made in the best interests of our communities.

**Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis**

**Local Government Association of South Australia President**

**Vic councils helping achieve positive community change**

Dear Editor,

The Victorian local government landscape has seen a great deal of change this year: some positive, some challenging, none of it dull and all of it highlighting the new roles local government can play in important ongoing issues.

As we look forward to, one day, enjoying constitutional recognition of local government, it is worth taking a look at the how local government is delivering key community outcomes in complex areas.

Very recently, we have witnessed the strength of community opinion at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), where it has been determined that strong community opposition to pokies is significant in deciding whether pokies are permissible.

The result is that an application for 30 electronic gaming machines at the Romsey Hotel has been refused.

This is a great win for the Macedon Ranges Shire and community in particular

and the many councils who have been trying to manage the impacts of problem gambling in their communities.

And it is heartening that community views were the decisive factor in the decision.

The decision on the Romsey Hotel emphasises the role of councils in protecting and improving community well-being.

This is a welcome acknowledgement of the extensive work that local governments do in the area of community health and social development.

We have moved on significantly from roads, rates and rubbish!

As we march towards the Copenhagen talks, again local governments are taking an increasingly important role in leading and assisting communities to act on climate change.

It is estimated that local government can influence more than 50% of greenhouse emissions in Australia by changing practices in waste management, improving buildings and, importantly, using more efficient street lighting.

Street lighting makes up about 50% of council emissions in some councils and changing public light-globes to more efficient globes can reduce the emissions of a council by about 15% – what an easy way to reach the targets to which we aspire for a safe climate future.

But while councils are in a position to make this significant contribution to our greenhouse emissions, the costs are high and we would welcome the funding of other levels of government to make help us with the task.

How many levels of government does it take to change a light-bulb? Answer: more than one!

These are just two areas where local government is increasingly proactive and demonstrating capacity to bring about positive community change.

As we continue to work through issues of planning, reconciliation, sustainability and community well-being, there will undoubtedly be more.

We have warmly welcomed federal infrastructure funding over the past 12 months and we look forward to even greater flexibility for funding opportunities to ensure that we have the resources to match our increasing portfolios!

**Rose Iser**

**President, Victorian Local Governance Association**

# The road to recovery for Murrindindi

Nearly 12 months after the tragic Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria's Murrindindi Shire is determinedly continuing to tackle the many challenges that remain to rebuild its communities, writes the shire's Mayor, **LYN GUNTER**.

Black Saturday was a life-changing day for everyone, especially the communities within the Murrindindi Shire.

The loss of families and friends was immeasurable, with the memories of those we lost staying with us forever. Through all of this the community spirit has been incredible.

The determination and courage of many has provided all of us with the strength to go about our daily business, albeit at times dragging our feet, but we are enduring.

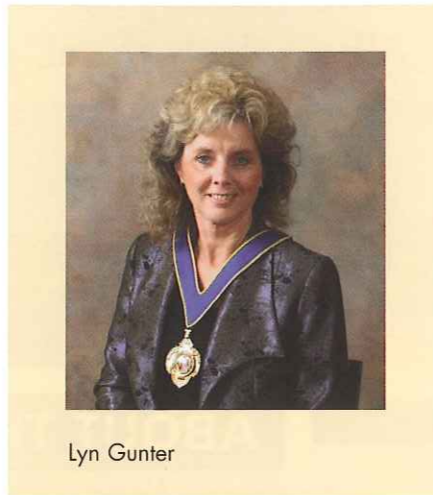
There is still so much that needs to be done.

We are committed to rebuilding homes and the communities, which will be recreated from the past, with looks of the future.

There has been tremendous help and support from numerous government agencies and departments and of course the Australian community as a whole.

This has enabled us to maintain regular services and day-to-day functions of council throughout these trying times.

The Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority (VBRRA) was appointed to assist the recovery process and council is working in partnership with Christine's Nixon's team.



Lyn Gunter

A committee has been set up under Section 86 of the *Local Government Act* with council delegating decision-making powers to enable an effective quick response to recovery and rebuilding issues.

Both VBRRA and council recognise the importance of community engagement and have set up six Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) whose primary role is to represent the views of the community in an advisory capacity, identifying issues and projects for the re-building.

To assist community-led processes we have also appointed five Community Development Officers.

Over the next 18 months they will be playing a pivotal role in supporting action on community priorities and projects.

Funding for the team has been provided by the Department of Human Services.

With funding from Regional Development Victoria, council has appointed two highly skilled Business Recovery officers to assist in the important role of Business Recovery as the economy of our communities and shire is a vitally important component in our short and long-term recovery.

Temporary villages have been set up in Flowerdale, Kinglake and Marysville and currently house 309 residents.

These villages will help our communities stay connected while they undertake the re-building of their homes.

It is great to see re-building activity happening across the shire.

*continued over page...*

## Murrindindi Shire's bushfire tragedy

**Amount of land within the Shire of Murrindindi that was burnt:** 40% - 1539 square km.

**Number of lives lost in the shire:** 106

**The number of houses destroyed in the shire:** 1397

**The length of fencing that was destroyed:** 3533 km (equivalent to a straight line from the Victorian town of Alexandra to Perth)

**The community and council facilities that were destroyed:** 5 community halls, 3 kindergartens, 2 primary schools, 1 police station, 3 Maternal & Child Health Centres, 1 retirement village, 1 caravan park, 1 child care centre and 1 transfer station/depot.



'Sunrise' on Channel 7 was in Marysville on November 2 to catch up with the locals and how they are going about rebuilding. Cr Lyn Gunter closed the show with a thanks to all of Australia for their assistance and support. Photo courtesy Graeme Haycraft

## Governance panel to help SA councils

Dear Editor,

In a first for local government in South Australia the Local Government Association recently appointed a Governance Panel – a new independent resource for councils to use to assist them address complaints about the conduct of Council Members

These issues include where a councillor is perceived to be acting outside the spirit of the *Local Government Act 1999*, or in a manner which is inconsistent with a council's Code of Conduct.

The six-member panel, with well-respected legal practitioner Kym Kelly as Chairperson, will not address allegations of fraud or corruption, which will continue to be referred to the Anti-Corruption Branch of the South Australian Police.

The initiative of the panel, instigated by local government for local government, is to provide an independent mechanism to assist councils to manage Council Members' Code of Conduct issues.

Over the past couple of years the Local Government Association has conducted extensive consultation with the local government sector, the Minister for

*continued from previous page...*

While legislation still requires residents to apply for a number of permits, we have made every endeavour to remove as much red tape as possible to speed up the processing time.

The resilience, courage and determination shown by the Murrindindi Shire communities is inspirational and we extend our sincere thanks to the emergency services, volunteer groups, local governments and all those who have and are assisting us through this difficult time.

We have already achieved a great deal but the job is far from over.

As we move forward, there are new challenges to be faced, but we face them together, knowing that through partnerships and with the strength and courage of all, we will succeed in rebuilding a new life for all.

**- At time of press, Cr Gunter had just announced that she intended to shortly step down from her position on Murrindindi Shire Council, but would continue to assist the community's recovery efforts.**

## Editorial Feedback

*Councillor Magazine* has established a **Letters to the Editor** column to foster lively debate amongst councillors about issues raised in the magazine – or any other local government matters. If you want to make a contribution to the next issue of *Councillor*, please email your letter to the Editor, Ben Hutchison, at [ben.hutchison@halledit.com.au](mailto:ben.hutchison@halledit.com.au)

State/Local Government Relations and other stakeholders to gauge the extent of support for an Independent Governance Panel for Local Government.

The Governance Panel has an advisory role only, and will prepare a report and recommendations on the appropriate action the council should take in response to the complaint, for the council's consideration.

This will further ensure that council business is conducted under the best possible governance conditions, which will continue to assure our communities that council decisions are made in the best interests of our communities.

**Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis**

**Local Government Association of South Australia President**

**Vic councils helping achieve positive community change**

Dear Editor,

The Victorian local government landscape has seen a great deal of change this year: some positive, some challenging, none of it dull and all of it highlighting the new roles local government can play in important ongoing issues.

As we look forward to, one day, enjoying constitutional recognition of local government, it is worth taking a look at the how local government is delivering key community outcomes in complex areas.

Very recently, we have witnessed the strength of community opinion at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), where it has been determined that strong community opposition to pokies is significant in deciding whether pokies are permissible.

The result is that an application for 30 electronic gaming machines at the Romsey Hotel has been refused.

This is a great win for the Macedon Ranges Shire and community in particular

and the many councils who have been trying to manage the impacts of problem gambling in their communities.

And it is heartening that community views were the decisive factor in the decision.

The decision on the Romsey Hotel emphasises the role of councils in protecting and improving community well-being.

This is a welcome acknowledgement of the extensive work that local governments do in the area of community health and social development.

We have moved on significantly from roads, rates and rubbish!

As we march towards the Copenhagen talks, again local governments are taking an increasingly important role in leading and assisting communities to act on climate change.

It is estimated that local government can influence more than 50% of greenhouse emissions in Australia by changing practices in waste management, improving buildings and, importantly, using more efficient street lighting.

Street lighting makes up about 50% of council emissions in some councils and changing public light-globes to more efficient globes can reduce the emissions of a council by about 15% – what an easy way to reach the targets to which we aspire for a safe climate future.

But while councils are in a position to make this significant contribution to our greenhouse emissions, the costs are high and we would welcome the funding of other levels of government to make help us with the task.

How many levels of government does it take to change a light-bulb? Answer: more than one!

These are just two areas where local government is increasingly proactive and demonstrating capacity to bring about positive community change.

As we continue to work through issues of planning, reconciliation, sustainability and community well-being, there will undoubtedly be more.

We have warmly welcomed federal infrastructure funding over the past 12 months and we look forward to even greater flexibility for funding opportunities to ensure that we have the resources to match our increasing portfolios!

**Rose Iser**

**President, Victorian Local Governance Association**