
THE GRANITE NEWS



The Granite News - serving the communities of Caveat, Highlands, Hughes Creek, Ruffy, Tarcombe, Terip Terip & Whiteheads Creek.



11th January 2026 | Volume 20 Issue 1

Welcome, Wumindjika & G'day

Sometimes words are totally inadequate.

They could also seem trite and just platitudes in the face of so much devastation, destruction and carnage over the last few days.

However, I will try....

Our beautiful landscape, so much infrastructure, valuable stock and wildlife has been irrevocably changed or totally destroyed and given the relentless force of nature there was nothing that could be done to stop this Armageddon from occurring.



A massive and heart-felt THANK YOU must go out to all CFA volunteers and emergency service personnel who have tried their utmost to stop the inevitable from happening. Everyone has done their best against overwhelming odds and for that our communities will be forever grateful.

Of course, the lengthy job of surveillance and blacking out, to ensure that our area is safe, will continue long past this weekend and for that ongoing commitment to our communities we thank those dedicated CFA individuals once again.

Whilst so many things are gone forever our strong and caring communities will remain. They are the fabric that bind all our lives together no matter where we live be it Caveat, Highlands, Ruffy, Terip Terip or Whiteheads Creek.

The most precious part of any community is its people. All our local communities are supportive of each other in the best of times, but it is now, in the worst of times, when love, care, support and empathy will be needed even more.

We can all look out for our neighbours but there are times when we need to look after ourselves too and on pages 3&4 there is a list of some of the support agencies that can assist with this in the coming days & weeks. No-one is an island; no-one should struggle alone. Please make use of them.

I write this, albeit at a distance, but with a heavy heart that my community for 35 years, my beautiful granite country with its far-reaching views, amazing wildlife and even more incredible people has been devastated. My memories are precious, as yours will be, and I know we will treasure them forever.

Kia kaha,
Pauline

NB: - Photos that have been in the public arena for the last few days are on p.2, please head straight to p.3 if they are going to be too confronting. (Photographers are Jenny Houghton, George Noye and the ABC)
Kia Kaha - was used by Jacinda Ardern in the wake of the Christchurch massacre - it is Maori for 'Stay strong'.



Sign outside the Highlands Hall

Small quantity of hay bales, they have some more - round bales are available too.

A State of Disaster has been declared in all 3 HCCC Shires - Mitchell, Murrindindi and Strathbogie

At present this declaration **remains in force until 8th February** and among other things means the Govt can

- Control movement in and out of the disaster area and
- Compel the evacuation of persons from the disaster area or any part of it.

However it also provides for

- the establishment and running of emergency relief centres
- personal and financial counselling
- removal of debris from residential properties to make them safe and habitable
- restoration of essential public assets and
- counter disaster operations.

Emergency relief assistance is also available for eligible community members who have had their home damaged or destroyed by the fires, or their home was in an evacuation warning area and they have had to evacuate.

This assistance can be accessed through the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Personal Hardship Assistance Program.

Assistance under the program includes a **one-off payment of \$680 per adult and \$340 per child, up to a maximum of \$2,380 per eligible family**, to help cover the costs of essentials like food, clothing, medication and accommodation.

If you think you may be eligible for a relief payment, please visit an Emergency Relief Centre - the Seymour Sports & Aquatic Centre @ Chittick Park - or call the VicEmergency hotline on 1800 226 226

Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment is a one off, non-means tested lump sum payment. It offers a payment of **\$1,000 for eligible adults and \$400 for eligible children** who've been adversely affected by a major disaster either in Australia or overseas. More information - available at **2pm on Wednesday 14 January 2026** on the Services Victoria website.

Health and Wellbeing

There are organisations who have caring councilors to assist if you are feeling overwhelmed and distressed

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--|
| • Lifeline | 13 11 14 | (24/7 support) |
| • Beyond Blue | 1300 224 636 | (when you don't know where to start) |
| • 1800RESPECT | 1800 737 732 | (family violence can happen to anyone, especially after trauma) |
| • ParentsLine | 13 22 89 | (8am - midnight - help to stay positive in difficult situations) |
| • Kids Helpline | 1800 55 1800 | (youth ages 5 - 25 years) |
| • Headspace | 1800 650 890 | (young people 12 - 25) |

For Absentee Landholders or readers who live at a distance



If you haven't already done so load both the Vic Emergency Service App and the ABC News App onto your phones as both provide accurate and as up-to-date information as possible (given the current, high demand, conditions).



Let others know you are safe

Let friends, family and emergency services know you are safe with [Red Cross Register.Find.Reunite](#). You can do this if you left your home, or if you are staying.

You can register at:

- a relief centre
- the Australian Red Cross website

VFF - the Victorian Farmers Federation

Has essential information on its website <https://www.vff.org.au/emergencies/> for times of need, including fodder supplies. It also accepts donations to support such relief.
Contact **1300 882 833**

Agriculture Victoria

has a wealth of information on its website including - [What to do after a bushfire](#) | [Bushfires](#) | [Emergency management](#) | [Farm management](#) | [Agriculture Victoria](#)

or ring **136 186**



Further options for fodder and financial support are....

Rural Aid - 1300 327 624 contact@ruralaid.org.au support including fodder, water and financial aid counselling to primary producers

Need for Feed contact@needforfeed.org under the auspices of Lions Clubs provides emergency feed

Livestock and Wildlife

Equine Emergency Support - 9258 4258 equinewelfare@racing.victoria.net.au for assistance related to horse welfare

Injured native animals - If you find an injured native animal you can contact **Wildlife Victoria on 8400 7300** to find wildlife carers and organisations

Finally and sadly, for livestock burial/disposal - go.vic.gov.au/49Wr9wl

Tank water

Your tank water may not be safe to drink after a fire. It could be contaminated from debris, ash, dead animals, aerial fire retardants and water-bombing.

If the water tastes, looks or smells unusual, do not:

- drink
- use for food preparation,
- use for brushing teeth
- give to animals (pets or livestock)
- Use bottled water for drinking.

If you disconnected your downpipes before the fire, hose off your roof or wait for heavy rain before you reconnect them.

Essential water replacement

If essential water is taken from your land to fight fires, you can request for it to be replaced.

The Essential Water Replacement Policy makes sure that water needed for homes, livestock, or crops is replaced.

To replace your water, you need to complete the Essential Water Replacement Form and email the completed form to

emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au.

You must request water replacement within 3 months of it being taken from your property. If essential water supplies run out, we will replace the water within 48 hours of your request, as long as it's safe.

For more information, visit Public land recovery on the FFMVic website. <https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/>

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Shire Council

Cr Paul Hildebrand

Koriella Ward
phildebrand@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

0428 758 617

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Tallarook 2026



The Granite News is widely distributed on the lands of the Taungurung clans - First People of the Rivers and Mountains.

We thank the Taungurung ancestors and elders who, for millennia, have cared for this country on which we now live, work & play. May the current generations of Taungurung, HCCC residents & landowners continue this important custodianship into the future.