



Tallangatta Memorial Hall Committee of Management

ABN 36880474750

23.04.2020

Kerry Love

Secretary

Tallangatta Memorial Hall Committee of Management

Tallangatta Memorial Hall response to the 2019/2020 bush fires in the Upper Murray area of North East Victoria.

On the 31 December 2019, a bush fire emergency was active in the Upper Murray area of Walwa and Cudegwa. By mid afternoon, the decision was made to activate the Emergency evacuation centre in Tallangatta, at the Memorial Hall.

The Victoria Police activated a comprehensive approach to evacuation of residents in these rural and isolated areas. This operation was planned, considered, and implemented the evacuation firstly by encouraging individuals—especially vulnerable people—to relocate early. This included assisted evacuation of vulnerable people and later a recommended 'emergency evacuation'. As the evening passed many residents, and tourists of all ages, and several small domestic pets arrived at the evacuation centre that was in the process of been activated and established at the Tallangatta Memorial Hall. The shared responsibility of the staff of Towong Shire, Victoria Police, government agencies, and community volunteers initially worked to establish the amenities - shelter, sleeping facilities, food, clothing, and personal items.

As a place of first call for emergency evacuation, understandably many individuals arrived at the emergency centre with little. It was a credit to the council staff and community members that the immediate needs of these individuals were met quickly and efficiently. Security, shelter, food, clothing, and personal care needs were all provided without hesitation, by staff and community members.

As that the urgency to the bush fire incident passes, and we move more into the recovery stage the committee has also had time to reflect on the use of the memorial hall as an Emergency Evacuation Centre. If in the future, there is a similar incident the committee feels that there is a need to provide evacuation centres in places of high fire dangers with facilities that would be regarded as the best possible amenities. Tallangatta Memorial Hall is well positioned to provide such a facility. As it exists the current infrastructure needs to be upgraded to meet the required needs of an efficient and well-resourced evacuation centre.

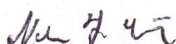
We have asked the question to improve the infrastructure and hence the long-term sustainability of the hall as an evacuation centre - **“How can the hall meet the needs of an Evacuation Centre better, more efficiently and provide greater security and comfort for the evacuees?”** The committee hope that the commission can consider this recommendation. By completing the upgrade of the facilities, the Committee of Management's hope of minimising the prospect of never having the best possible amenities available if this situation ever arises again would be realised.

The Memorial hall was constructed in the mid 50's and was never designed for such a purpose. As it presently stands the hall lacks the capacity to be an efficient and supportive evacuation centre. Such an upgrade would provide confidence and support to the Victorian and local government - Towong Shire, in the knowledge that if a future event arises, the local facilities and amenities are in the best possible condition and position to respond to the needs required. That is, the facilities are up to date and provide for the personal needs of all the evacuees, accommodates the government authorities of the Incident Command Centre, the government support groups and the non-government agencies who also respond to such incidents.

Given the changing nature of the bushfire season; that is an extended bushfire time frame, and increasing impact of the fires on property and lives there is a need to create and resource places of last resort in strategically located areas to in rural areas. By building, repairing, and upgrading the existing infrastructure in high fire risk areas.

From a geographical position, Tallangatta is well placed and located to response to the needs of people in the Upper Murray - eg Murray River towns of Walwa, Tintaldra, Granya, Mitta Mitta Valley towns Mitta Mitta and Eskdale of the Towong Shire. Rural towns in the Indigo Shire - Sandy Creek Valley and the Kiewa Valley. Towns such as Talmalmo and Jingellic along the Murray River in NSW side could also access this evacuation centre depending on the location of the emergency.

Norm Crisp



President

Tallangatta Memorial Hall Committee of Management