



**Forum Outcomes & Action Plan from
“Our Voices, Our Future”
Halls Gap Bushfire Recovery Community Forum**

Hosted by Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet on Monday 28th April 2025

**Version 3 For Circulation
to Community by Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet**

Supported by The Building Community Resilience Project, Funded by Northern Grampians Shire Council and Victorian Government

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Principal Consultants & Facilitators

HAPPY
changemakers

Revision History

Ver.	Date	Notes	Author
1.0	05 May 2025	Initial version - Draft	J. Willmer
2.0	22 May 2025	Review & Feedback	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet
3.0	31 May 2025	Integration of Feedback. Final Version for Public Distribution	J. Willmer
3.0	02 June 2025	Public Distribution	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet

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Attachment A – Community Association of Halls Gap Inc Slides
Attachment B – Slides as presented

Summary

Forum Outcomes

Over 50 community members, business owners, residents, part time residents from Halls Gap and surrounds including and Northern Grampian Shire Deputy Mayor, CEO and Staff attended the “Our Voices, Our Future Bushfire Recovery Community Forum”, held on Monday 28th April 2025.

We heard from engaging local guest speakers and learnt about governance models of community led recovery, in particular from East Gippsland, Victoria.

What we heard was:

- **Leadership and initiative:** The Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet (HGKC) was praised for stepping up and providing leadership, especially around communication and organising.
- **Positive sense of community:** Many participants appreciated how the bushfire recovery process brought different parts of the community together — more inclusive than previous efforts.
- **Relief at shared responsibility:** Some longstanding community leaders expressed relief that leadership was being shared and want to be inclusive, tap into skills, resources and talents within and outside our community.
- **Communication praised but with gaps:** Graham Parkes’ human-centred email updates were widely appreciated. However, communication methods (especially digital) were not reaching everyone — e.g. mobile access to “Fill the Gap” was poor.
- **Concerns about disconnection:** Noted separation between business owners and residents, and between Halls Gap and Pomonal — with a desire for better integration.
- **Media portrayal:** Mistrust and frustration about how events were depicted in mainstream media, that impacts visitation and local businesses.
- **Consensus:** The Community wants to continue community led recovery efforts with a new sub-committee that will be voted on by the community allowing more people to put up their hand to help out.
- **Opportunity:** For Halls Gap to form a new sub-committee to be auspiced by the Community Association of Halls Gap Inc, with a statement of purpose and terms of reference. This means we don’t have to set up another a new incorporated association. CAHG has a proven 30-year track record of supporting groups like this, with one bank account, one insurance policy and established governance systems.

The Outcomes of the Community Forum have been documented, and the Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet would love your feedback. The Kitchen Cabinet invites you to get involved or share your ideas by contacting us via email: HGKitchenCabinet@gmail.com

Introduction

Background and Context

Halls Gap and surrounding communities, businesses, residents and environment were affected by an initial bushfire which ignited on December 17, 2024 following a lightning strike near Yarram Gap Road in Gariwerd (Grampians National Park), Victoria. Several additional fires in Gariwerd followed through January and February 2025.

Halls Gap's community members have formed an informal community recovery committee, called "Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet" (auspiced by the Community Association of Halls Gap Inc) that meets weekly to discuss recovery and advocacy priorities for local businesses, industries, and communities and liaison with individuals, community groups, businesses, Northern Grampians Shire Council and other stakeholders.

Coming out of early community meetings in late December 2024 that acknowledged the power of community led recovery, the Kitchen Cabinet came together while Halls Gap was still in the midst of the fires, anticipating being a time-limited group, and initially made up of representatives from existing community groups and business operators who had been working to create connections across the community. The Kitchen Cabinet began delivering events and opportunities focused on wellbeing and community connection, recognising that it is up to the community to act for ourselves, and assisted by initial funds via an emergency \$5,000 grant provided by Northern Grampians Shire Council. The Kitchen Cabinet extends an open invitation to any community member who would like to join our meetings or events.

The Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet have held a myriad of community events in partnership with businesses, community groups, and key community organisations like Neighbourhood House including:

- 31 December 2024 - Community NYE Dinner
- Activities supporting us to restore & connect:
Yoga, art therapy, relaxation sessions, kids disco pool party, water aerobics, dancing in the dark, cooling place, roadside clean ups, pétanque night, pop art bunting & weaving
- 31 March 2025 – Wellbeing Evening & Community BBQ
- 28 April 2025 – **Our Voice, Our Future, Exploring the Future Together** Community Forum
- 3 & 4 May 2025 – Community stall at The Grape Escape, Halls Gap

Happy Changemakers was engaged by Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet to support the community recovery journey and work with the volunteers from Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet to co-create, develop and facilitate a 2-3 hour Bushfire Recovery Community Forum, held on 28 April 2025. As stewards of the early community recovery process and activities, one of the Kitchen Cabinet's main goals was to convene this forum as an open, inclusive opportunity to contribute to the community recovery next steps.

The purpose of the Community Forum was to provide an opportunity for community members to explore different models of establishing a Community Recovery Committee (as a new legal entity or auspice arrangement) for community led recovery.

"Our Voice, Our Future, Exploring the Future Together" Community Forum was held on Monday 28 April 2025 from 6.30pm-8.30pm at the Halls Gap Centenary Hall and was attended by 60 people (not including children who were in the meeting room doing activities)

The Community Forum was promoted via Community flyers which were displayed in noticeboards (pictured on following page 6), Facebook posts, videos, emails and an article in "Fill the Gap"



OUR VOICES OUR FUTURE

THE HALLS GAP KITCHEN CABINET IS
HOSTING A COMMUNITY FORUM & MEAL TO
TALK ABOUT OUR RECOVERY & OUR FUTURE

JOIN US ON


MONDAY APRIL 28TH 2025
CENTENNIAL HALL (MAIN STREET)

6.00PM FOOD & CHATS

6.30-8.30PM FORUM

5.30 SET UP - ANY HELP APPRECIATED
PLEASE BRING FINGER FOOD TO SHARE

**IF YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT HALLS
GAP THEN COME & SHARE YOUR IDEAS**


FACILITATED BY JODIE WILLMER, HAPPY CHANGEMAKERS FROM EAST
GIPPSLAND, WHO WORKED WITH BUSINESS OWNERS AND COMMUNITIES
POST BLACK SUMMER 19/20 BUSHFIRES.

THANKS TO NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE. SUPPORTED BY THE BUILDING
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT.

MORE INFORMATION: [KITCHENCABINET@GMAIL.COM](mailto:kitchencabinet@gmail.com)

Community Forum

Agenda

6:30pm – Welcome and Introduction

Nicki Van Veen, Convenor, Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet

- **Acknowledgement of Country**
- **Welcome to all attendees**, including residents, business owners, part-time locals, professionals, and friends with a connection to Halls Gap. The community forum was supported by the Building Community Resilience Project, Northern Grampians Shire Council and Victorian Government. Thank you for your support.
- **Purpose of the Forum:**
 1. To share what's already underway for community-led recovery
 2. To highlight the possibilities for community-led recovery
 3. To explore next steps together
- **Introduction: Facilitator: Jodie Willmer and Rob Nagy, Happy Changemakers**

6:45pm – Stories from the Community: The Work So Far (5 mins)

Brief introductions by: Nicki Van Veen, Convenor of the Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet on what community led recovery is and the 5 Pillars of recovery:

- 5 Pillars of recovery and frameworks:
 - People and wellbeing
 - Aboriginal culture and healing
 - Environment and biodiversity
 - Business and economy
 - Buildings and infrastructure

6:50pm – Guest Speakers (5 minutes each)

- Brief talks from 3 guest speakers to spark ideas and provide inspiration.

6:50pm – 6.55pm Speaker 1:

- **Jenny Gumela**, Manager of Breeze Holiday Parks – Grampians and member of the Halls Gap Primary School Council

6.55pm-7.00pm Speaker 2:

- **Graham Parkes**, President of the Community Association of Halls Gap Inc. and member of the Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet

7.00pm -7.10pm Speaker 3:

- **Jodie Willmer**, Facilitator
 - Overview of different models of community led recovery committees with visual models on screen and printed on tables (10 mins)

7.15pm - 7.25pm - Break (10 mins)

7:25pm – Small Group Conversations (World Café Style) – 30 mins

Questions to explore:

1. What are your reflections about community led recovery so far?
2. What is your personal vision for Halls Gap and surrounds broader recovery and resilience?
3. How would you like to contribute/be involved? Are you able to offer time and/or personal skills?
4. How do you imagine your vision could be financed or supported?

7:55pm – Gathering the Gold – 10 mins (2 mins per table x 5 tables)

Report back to the full group

8:05pm – Where to from here? – 20 mins

Group reflection and next steps discussion

8:25pm – Final Comments, Thanks & Close

Forum Photos

We had a great turnout with 60 in attendance!



Photo Credit: Daniela Prange, Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet

Key Themes from Group Discussions

After a short break, attendees were invited to join a small group discussion at one of five tables. Each table had a facilitator from Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet and a scribe from Northern Grampians Shire Council.

The agenda items were:

- Small group conversations (World Café style)
- Gathering the Gold (reporting back)
- Where to from here? Consensus on possible next steps (facilitated discussion)

The workshop asked participants to respond to four key questions over 30 minutes (noting that not every group addressed all questions due to time limits):

Key Workshop Questions

1. What are your reflections about community-led recovery so far?
2. What is your personal vision for Halls Gap and surrounds' broader recovery and resilience?
3. How would you like to contribute or be involved?
4. How could your vision be financed or supported?

Emerging Themes from the Community Responses

1. Reflections on Recovery So Far

- **Positive sense of community:** Many participants appreciated how the bushfire recovery process brought different parts of the community together — more inclusive than previous efforts.
- **Leadership and initiative:** The Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet (HGKC) was praised for stepping up and providing leadership, especially around communication and organising.
- **Relief at shared responsibility:** Some longstanding community leaders expressed relief that leadership was being shared.
- **Communication praised but with gaps:** Graham Parkes' human-centred email updates were widely appreciated. However, communication methods (especially digital) were not reaching everyone — e.g. mobile access to “Fill the Gap” was poor.
- **Concerns about disconnection:** Noted separation between business owners and residents, and between Halls Gap and Pomonal — with a desire for better integration.
- **Media portrayal:** Mistrust and frustration about how events were depicted in mainstream media, that impacts visitation and local businesses.

2. Personal Visions for Recovery and Resilience

- **A more liveable town:** Many expressed the desire for Halls Gap to be positioned not just as a tourist destination but as a great place to live year-round.
- **Housing and infrastructure:** There were repeated calls for more long-term rentals, land for housing, and better infrastructure (especially power and telecommunications).
- **Stronger community identity and cohesion:** Requests for a clearer community vision and shared sense of purpose. A “Hub” or welcoming shared space was often mentioned.

- **Tourism and environment balance:** Recognition that tourism, community, and environment are interconnected. A need to balance them thoughtfully.
- **Inclusion of Traditional Owners:** One group questioned whether Traditional Owners were being appropriately involved in decision-making.
- **Planning and preparedness:** Desire for a standing, proactive group and disaster plan. Interest in formalising emergency and communication structures.
- **Environmental resilience:** Calls for year-round bushfire preparedness including green waste pickups, fuel reduction programs, and education.

3. Contribution and Participation

- **Strong willingness to contribute:** Participants indicated eagerness to get involved, especially if events and roles were clearly communicated.
- **Need for better invitations:** Several asked for clearer advertising of upcoming events and more welcoming processes for newcomers.
- **Practical ideas for involvement:**
 - Community-led communications (including social media to counteract media misinformation)
 - Data management, event coordination, Landcare involvement
 - Interest in volunteering, voting on decisions, and contributing skills (e.g. media, networks, planning)

4. Financing and Support

- **Don't wait for grants:** Many wanted a proactive approach rather than waiting for government funding.
- **Better use of existing resources:** Suggestions to reprioritise local government funding and utilise what's already available.
- **External support:** Emphasis on targeted support from the Shire (especially for fuel reduction and bushfire readiness).
- **Tourist levy/tax:** Proposed by some as a possible way to fund recovery and infrastructure.
- **Support for business community:** Seen as vital to the overall community's stability and resilience.

5. Cross-Cutting Priorities

- **Improve local communication methods** (beyond email/flyers).
- **Build a recognisable, enduring group** to support preparedness and response between events.
- **Welcome new residents** with an orientation or info pack.
- **Develop a community-wide skills register** to activate local capacity in future crises.
- **Better integrate Pomonal, Halls Gap, part-time locals, and absentee landholders** into all communications and initiatives.

Action Plan

Actions listed in this plan arose from the pre-workshop planning and workshop discussions, noting that actions and timelines will be refined over May-July 2025.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Status
Type up "Contact details list" (from Community Forum) and store in Google Sheet	29 April 2025	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	Completed
Share Outcomes and Actions (Final Version) with community (including Forum attendees)	02 June 2025	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	
Communicate with people who have expressed interest in volunteering/helping	May-25	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	
Review Resources shared by Happy Changemakers including Auspicing Agreements and East Gippsland Community Recovery Toolbox https://www.nfplaw.org.au/free-resources/working-with-others/what-is-auspicing	TBD	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet and any interested community members	
Hold debrief and finalise action plan, timeline and responsibilities	29 April 2025	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	
Create a Communications & Engagement Plan for establishment of Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet as formal community recovery group/committee	TBD	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	
Write article for next edition of "Fill The Gap" and share on social media and email list	May / June-25	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	
Meet with Northern Grampians Shire Council for debrief and identify ways to collaborate	TBD	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet & Northern Grampians Shire Council	

Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Status
Discuss process to formalise and continue to auspiced by Community Association of Halls Gap Inc.	June 25	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet with Community Association of Halls Gap Inc.	
Draft Community Recovery Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Purpose • Terms of Reference • Participation and selection process • Auspice Agreement 	By 1 July-25	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet with Community Association of Halls Gap Inc.	
Seek input/feedback from community and stakeholders	July-25	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	
Identify and approach an experienced Community Recovery Committee mentor via DisasterWise	Jun-25	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet with Community Association of Halls Gap Inc.	
Advocate for seed funding and admin support	June–July 2025	Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet	

APPENDICES

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Appendix A - Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the volunteers helpers, and Northern Grampians Shire Council staff whose work and support made this workshop possible.

A special thank you to current and past Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet members:

- Nicki Van Veen, Convenor
- Alison Bainbridge
- Angel Thompson
- April Clarke
- Blanche Leithhead
- Biz Appeldorff
- Danny Prange
- Graham Parkes
- Jessica Bradley
- Joy Robson
- Justine Hide
- Luke Baker
- Rosemary Medlock
- Rowena Witham
- Sally Goldstraw

We would like to acknowledge the financial support that made this workshop possible through The Building Community Resilience Project, funded by Northern Grampians Shire Council and Victorian Government.

Appendix B - Project Methodology

Note that the Project Methodology relates to planning for the workshop.

Phase 1: Planning

Objective:

To plan the community forum.

Key Activities:

- Preplanning online meeting with Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet Committee and relevant stakeholders (1 hour)
- To agree on goals and format for the Community forum
- Identify stakeholders to invite
- To identify suitable dates/venues/speakers/roles
- Phone discussion with one or two key stakeholders i.e. Northern Grampians Shire Council Recovery Officer

Output:

- Project Plan
- Draft Agenda & Session Plan (for event planning)

Phase 2: Promotion

Objective:

To promote the community forum to maximise attendance and engagement.

Key Activities:

- Create forum flyer
- 2 posts for promotion of event for social media
- Set up Event Bookings via Humanitix (online booking) or other free service
- Media Release /Newsletter copy
- Promotion and invitations to be sent (by Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet Committee)

Output:

- Forum Promotion Plan

Phase 3: Community Forum

Objective:

Hold a well-attended and engaged forum to provide opportunities for discussions from a broad cross section of people, consensus on establishing a formal community recovery committee.

Key Activities:

- Facilitation of 2–3-hour workshop with breaks (in person in Halls Gap) in evening on Monday 28 April 2025

Output:

- Write up of Workshop outcomes (max 5 pages) and Action Plan (on a page), circulated in 5 business days of workshop
- Check in call online with Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet Committee, post workshop

Appendix C - Community Led Recovery Committee Models

Definitions

Community-led approach (AIDR, 2018; Dibley et al., 2019)– Strong community participation and leadership in planning, implementation and evaluation– Strengthening local resources, capacity and resilience– Effective community engagement and facilitation processes • Local governance and “Shared responsibility” for disaster recovery (McLennan et al., 2016)

The manifestation of public participation in local planning and policy making for disaster recovery. They are entities, formed purposefully by communities to be an active party to decision-making about recovery. These groups negotiate rules for membership and operation, their scope, their relationship to government, and their model of representation and accountability to the community.

In short, Community led recovery, driven by community and businesses, with support.

Examples

Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc MADRA

<https://www.madrecovery.com/>

Like many other communities in 2019–20, the Mallacoota district in East Gippsland, Victoria was ravaged by fire. In our community's living memory, there is no comparable event. Mallacoota is a small area with a population of around 1,200 that can swell to 8,000 at holiday times. In the summer of 2019–20, bushfires caused significant devastation of wildlife and bushlands with 83% of land area burnt and 123 homes destroyed.

Since then, flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic have been cascading events that have disrupted and damaged the community. Their story of community-led recovery –shows what a small community can achieve and the lessons they have learnt along the way.

The Mallacoota and District Recovery Association Inc (MADRA) was established shortly after the fires. A group of locals – the Thinking Group – proposed a model for community-led recovery based on experiences of the Victorian town, Strathewen, in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. This model was endorsed at a community meeting attended by over 500 locals in February 2020.

Establishing a mission (why we exist) and a vision (what recovery looks like for the community) were important anchors to ensure recovery efforts were focused and targeted. As we worked through our mission statement, a 16-year-old hit the nail on the head: we are a ‘voice’ for our community.

Our vision is to be ‘an inclusive, vibrant, strong and safe community’, which will be achieved when:

- Everyone who needs bushfire assistance has received it.
- We have restored what we loved and fixed what was broken.
- We are prepared for future disasters.
- We have laid the foundations for a more resilient community.

- Incorporated association
- Registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not for profit commission
- Tax Concessions and Deductible Gift Recipient Status. – probono legal advice from MinterEllison for the establishment and 4 years later on future options.

Where are they now? – small committee of only 4 and running a community forum in mid/late May to encourage others to get involved or to disband or change MADRA role/functions or establish something new.

People’s Republic Of Mallacoota Documentary Series

- <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/people-s-republic-of-mallacoota>

Sarsfield Community Association

<https://www.sarsfield.com.au/>

The Sarsfield community was heavily impacted by the 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires. 49% of the land area was burnt and 77 dwellings were destroyed. Residents lost power and telecommunications, and more than 130 residents were displaced. The Sarsfield Hall became an essential refuge for the Sarsfield community immediately following the bushfires. The Sarsfield Hall committee supported residents with relief efforts as they emerged from their homes seeking advice, clean water, a friendly face, and someone to talk to.

After Sarsfield Community Association's application for National Summer Bushfire Recovery funding was deemed ineligible due to a technicality, they were then promised funding through the Community Development Grants program, only to see that program axed following the election and all applications reassessed. In early 2023, the Sarsfield Community Association partnered with Council to resubmit the funding application to build a brand-new community hall and develop a new community space which includes a children's playground, walking and cycling trail, picnic areas, and gathering spaces.

Bruthen & District Citizens Association

<https://bruthendistrict.org.au/bruthen-district-citizens-association/>

Auspices: Community Recovery Committee and Bruthen Neighbourhood House.

Their purpose includes auspicing and Chamber of Commerce/Business and Tourism Association.

Key Considerations

From Emergency Recovery Victoria's Toolkit 2023

How to activate an existing organisation or group as a CRG

"Where a CRG is created from an existing organisation or groups it will be useful to ask questions such as:

Does the recovery role fit with the organisation's existing governance and structures? Does the organisation's purpose need updating?

If the recovery group is a collaboration between existing organisations, are partners clear on their roles?

Is there a need for a Memorandum of Understanding or similar?

Does the organisation or collaboration reflect the broad range of values, cultures and perspectives within your community, including diversity of place (e.g. townships), interests (e.g. small business), age, gender, culture, and population groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, in particular Traditional Owners. If not, how will this be addressed, (e.g. recruiting new members or through targeted community consultation)?

Does the organisation or collaboration have the skills and time necessary to lead and coordinate community recovery activities? If not, how will this be addressed, for example, co-opting expertise into the organisation or contracting experts?

How do we form a purpose-built CRG? A purpose-built CRG is likely to be an advisory or decision-making committee of council or an independent incorporated organisation.

While the details to establish these different models will vary, each will need to answer the questions: How will we select community leaders to represent us? What is our purpose and how will our CRG operate?"

Appendix D - Resources

Emergency Recovery Victoria

<https://www.vic.gov.au/about-emergency-recovery-victoria>

East Gippsland Shire Council

<https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/community-recovery>

- Community Recovery Committees (CRCs)
- Community recovery resources – **see East Gippsland's Community Recovery Committee ToolBox**
- Community Recovery Plans
- Rebuilding support

East Gippsland Emergency Dashboard

<https://emergencydashboard.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au>

DisasterWise

<https://www.disasterwise.com.au/>

- DisasterWISE is a learning network growing a movement of people who are building disaster resilience through self-determination and community-led action. By holding a space for people to connect, learn, and drive real change, DisasterWISE is an enabler for people to build stronger, just and thriving futures.

Community Recovery Navigator

<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-67c931f06c3c81919ceac1f36ab96926-community-recovery-navigator>

- Designed by Pete Williams, chair of CRC LinkUp and Board member of DisasterWise.

Resilient Ready and Doing Disasters Differently, Podcast

<https://resilientready.org/>

- “Social Capital encompasses the trust, ties and networks that bind people. Social Infrastructure are the places that build those connections.” The more businesses are connected with each other, with their communities, and with stakeholders such as emergency services, the more effective risk reduction measures are”

Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

<https://www.aidr.org.au/programs/volunteer-leadership-program/>

Foundations in Disaster Recovery

<https://mbspgh.unimelb.edu.au/centres-institutes/centre-for-health-equity/research-group/child-community-wellbeing/engage/short-courses/foundations-in-disaster-recovery>

- Understanding Impacts to People and Communities: August 2025

Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal

<https://frrr.org.au/funding/disaster-resilience-and-climate-solutions/>

- Disaster preparedness and Recovery Grants promoting resilience, community connectedness, and emergency preparedness

Insurance

<https://www.localcommunityinsurance.com.au/>

- Event Community Insurance – Public Liability Insurance – LCIS Community Group Risk Management, not for profit Risk management

Aon Risk Service & Our Community Partnership

<https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/insurance-and-risk-management>

Institute of Community Directors

- Home Page: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/>
- Policy Bank: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/policy-bank>
- Training: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/training/home>

Justice Connect, Not for Profit Law

- **Training:** <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/>
- **Legal Advice:** <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/help>
For eligible charities, not for profits, social enterprises
- **Auspicing Agreement:** <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/free-resources/working-with-others/what-is-auspicing>

Appendix E - Group Discussions

Participant Responses Organised by Workshop Question

The following responses were captured during the small group discussions at the community forum. They have been grouped by the guiding questions for ease of reference.

The key themes were:

- meaningful and enduring community connection, not just a tourist town identity
- improving our communication channels and skills
- improving our emergency preparedness and recovery

Question 1. What are your reflections about community led recovery so far?

- Clarification Kitchen Cabinet v Snappy Gappy
- Communication – why & whom the recovery groups were.
- New member – community events positive
- Found events by the community made me welcome.
- Connection to community over period positive.
- HGRC has provided the things we didn't know we needed.
- "Community leaders" are approachable.
- Even if you just attend / participate in events, that is IMPORTANT!
- Different to previous responses – brought everyone together. Previously driven by tourism-driven groups.
- 4th event – scariest one to date.
- Extremely refreshing – new views (people who have homes here – don't live here). More inclusive.
- People who are constantly leading the pace can now sit back a little.
- Separation between business owners + residents at times – residents can lose touch.
- Excellent communication from many sources / different channels. "Is it reaching everybody?"
- Telecommunication concerns ongoing.
- It is fantastic but there needs to be a business component.
- Don't have tourism without community and no tourism without environment – it's all intertwined.
- Do we need to be approaching Traditional Owners? Are they being included in the decision making?
- Communication – is there other ways to share information with people e.g. not email/flyers.
 - Some methods don't work for everyone.
 - Connectivity in various forms is paramount.
- Connection with Pomonal needs to be improved.
 - Stronger connections.
- The activities focused on connection initially were very important and made a difference.
- The community did a great job in communicating outside of Halls Gap about what was happening.
 - Media information was misleading.
- Graham's emails were fantastic. The emails were human and informative.
- Activities very good
- Bringing community closer together
- Would like to have broader reach – want to connect/communicate to more
- We will face more of these events
- The impact of the media presentation of events

Question 2. What is your personal vision for Halls Gap and surrounds broader recovery and resilience?

- More people to live here
- Focus on community that live here
- If not tourism, the locals focus.
- Promotion of a place to live – Halls Gap
- It is a liveable town
- Housing and benefit of liveability

- More long term stay & rental.
- Sell the town to bring locals in – schools, health, housing, employment
- Is there land to be developed
- To grow housing & for liveability.
- Planning discussions.
- Rated high in Halls Gap v other spaces
- Was free pick up green waste for bushfire preparedness – do it again.
- Fire crew more preparedness for bushfire
- Was done in the past – do again
- Relive stress if town fire prepared.
- Green waste – free (no cost)
- Halls Gap needs a community vision.
 - Missing clear identity
 - Don't have one single "hub"
 - Connection opportunity
 - Regular community shared open spaces / community sports
 - Develop the Hub
- FACILITY / PLACE to support community activities
 - Welcoming
 - Flexible
 - Neighbourhood House which has its own space
 - Use of existing space (Hall, Rec Reserve)
- Introduce a "tourist tax"
- Support for improved power + comms infrastructure
- Close the gap between Pomonal + Halls Gap. Don't make them different communities.
- Resilience – end point. Events will continue – have a plan – this is what we will do. "We all know what to do."
- Proactive planning
- Feeling safe in our businesses + communities – basic needs secured
- Stabilise foundations under our businesses (security)
 - e.g. insurance
- Gov. assistance in several areas
- Proactive planning for businesses
- Cohesive community with planning in place, ability to regain sense of control, engage with agencies
- Build the plan now!
- Forest fire management comes to community – celebrating this
- Debrief + review what happened during recent events
- Support of Shire
- Prevention works – ongoing throughout the year
- Halls Gap needs a media plan or the ICC media needs to be more transparent.
- Better equipment for community meetings/media in an event.
 - e.g. hearing loop.
- (arrowed note) community media – assign a team – localised information
- An enduring group/work that continues in between the event
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 - absentee landholders, past residents
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 - People don't know that
- Welcome pack for new residents
- More connected, stronger community
- Increase opportunities for practical participation
- To be ready for more of these events
- Better integration – including parks, residents, visitors, businesses
- Understand skills that community & individuals have (SKILL BASE)

Question 3. How would you like to contribute/be involved? Are you able to offer time and/or personal skills?

- Like to see if opportunity around
- Advertise / invite upcoming events
- And then volunteer.
- Jump in when can
- Vote on major decisions
- What was membership cost to be a member
- Free
- How do we communicate
- How do we get communication to all community – there is a gap in
- Yes: willing to contribute
- Data management – Pat
- Flyers – Melissa
- Landcare, Roadside, Botanic Gardens – Martin
- Sugar / Swimming – Ange
- Social media to counteract the unbalanced mainstream media
- Leveraging personal & local networks to share
- Use individuals' skills to make practical
- External volunteers

Question 4. How do you imagine your vision could be financed or supported?

- Grant funding
- Northern Grampians Shire
- Strong visitation to drive economy
- Being proactive – not waiting for grants
- Better utilisation of existing resources
- Shire support for reducing fuel load
- Better targeting / reprioritising of funds
- Broader community can support the business community

Appendix E - Group Discussions (continued)

Flipcharts

1. Reflections.
Clarification Kitchen Cabinet v Snappy Gappy
Communications why + whom the recovery groups were
New member - community events positive
Found events by the community made me welcome
Connection to community over period positive.

2. Personal Vision HALLS GAP.
MORE people to live here
focus on community that live here
If NOT tourism the LOCALS focus.
promotion of A PLACE TO LIVE.
HALLS GAP
IT IS A LIVEABLE TOWN
HOUSING AND BENEFIT of liveability
MORE long term stay v rental.
to sell the town to BRING LOCALS IN
Schools, Health, Housing, Employment
IS THERE LAND TO BE DEVELOPED
TO GROW HOUSING for liveability.
PLANNING DISCUSSIONS.
RATED HIGH IN HALLS GAP v OTHER SPACES
WAS FREE PICK UP GREEN WASTE FOR
BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS - DO IT AGAIN

1. Reflections.

Clarification Kitchen Cabinet v Snappy Gappy
Communication – why & whom the recovery groups were.
New member – community events positive
Found events by the community made me welcome.
Connection to community over period positive.

2. Personal Vision – Halls Gap

More people to live here
Focus on community that live here
If not tourism, the locals focus.
Promotion of a place to live – Halls Gap

It is a liveable town
Housing and benefit of liveability
More long term stay & rental.
Sell the town to bring locals in – schools, health, housing, employment
Is there land to be developed
To grow housing & for liveability.
Planning discussions.

Rated high in Halls Gap v other spaces
Was free pick up green waste for bushfire preparedness – do it again.

FIRE CREW MORE PREPARED FOR BUSHFIRE
WAS DONE IN THE PAST - DO AGAIN
RELIEVE STRESS IF TOWN FIRE PREPARED.
GREEN WASTE FREE

3. HOW BE INVOLVED

LIKE TO SEE IF OPPORTUNITY AROUND
ADVERTISE / INVITE UP COMING EVENTS
AND THEN VOLUNTEER.
JUMP IN WHEN CAN

VOTE ON MAJOR DECISIONS

WHAT WAS MEMBERSHIP COST TO BE A MAJOR
MEMBER
FREE

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE

HOW DO WE GET COMMUNICATION TO ALL
COMMUNITY. - THERE IS A GAP IN

4.

GRANT FUNDING

NORTHERN GRAMP SHIRE

STRONG VISITATION. TO DRIVE ECONOMY

Fire crew more preparedness for bushfire

Was done in the past - do again

Relive stress if town fire prepared.

Green waste - free

3. How be involved

Like to see if opportunity around

Advertise / invite upcoming events

And then volunteer.

Jump in when can

Vote on major decisions

What was membership cost to be a member

Free

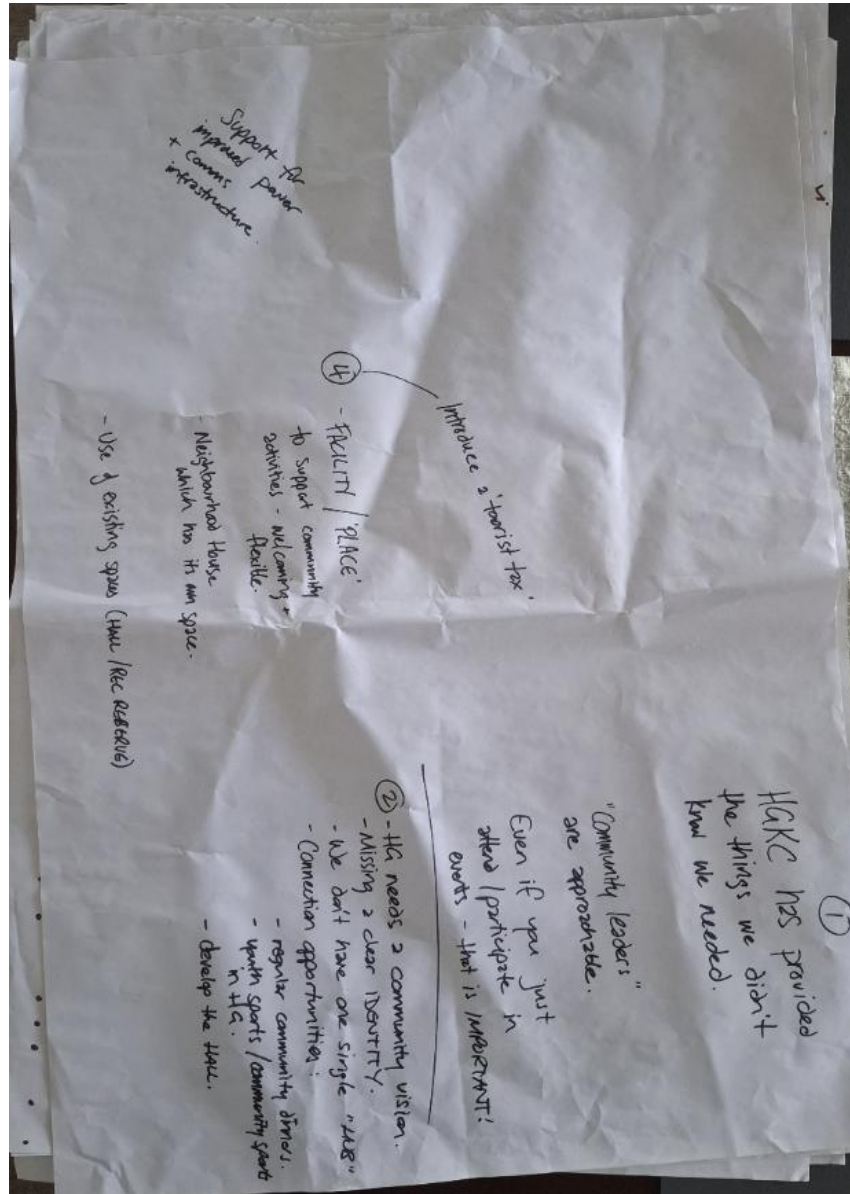
How do we communicate

How do we get communication to all community - there is a gap in

4. Grant funding

Northern Grampians Shire

Strong visitation to drive economy



1. HGRC has provided the things we didn't know we needed.
 - "Community leaders" are approachable.
 - Even if you just attend / participate in events, that is IMPORTANT!
 2. Halls Gap needs a community vision.
 - Missing clear identity
 - Don't have one single "hub"
 - Connection opportunity
 - Regular community shared open spaces / community sports
 - Develop the Hub
 3. FACILITY / PLACE to support community activities
 - Welcoming
 - Flexible
 - Neighbourhood House which has its own space
 - Use of existing space (Hall, Rec Reserve)
 4. Introduce a "tourist tax"
- Support for improved power + comms infrastructure

1. Reflections on recovery so far...

- Different to previous responses - brought everyone together. Previously driven by tourism-driven groups.
- 4th event - scariest one to date.
- Extremely refreshing - new views (ppl who have homes here - don't live here) - More inclusive
- Ppl who are constantly leading the pace can now sit back a little.
- Separation between business owners + residents at times. Residents can lose touch.
- Excellent communication from many sources / diff. channels. "Is it reaching everybody?"
- Telecommunication concerns ongoing.

2. Personal vision - broaden recovery + resilience

- Close the gap ^{upgrade facilities} btw Pomonal + Halls Gap. Don't make them different communities.
- Resilience - end point. Events will continue - have a plan - this is what we will do. "We all know what to do"
- Pro-active planning
- Feeling safe in our businesses + communities - basic needs ^{secured}
- Stabilise foundations under our businesses (security)
eg. insurance
- Gov. assistance in several areas
- Proactive planning for businesses.
- Cohesive community with planning in place, ability to regain sense of control, engage with agencies.
- Build the plan now!
- Forest fire management comes to community - + celebrating this
- Debrief + review what happened during recent events.
- Support of Shire.
- Prevention works - on-going throughout the year.

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- Debrief + review what happened during recent events
- Support of Shire
- Prevention works - ongoing throughout the year

3. How ppl can contribute?

- Yes: willing to contribute

4. How can your vision be financed? Supported

- Being proactive - not waiting for grants.
- Better utilisation of existing resources
- Shire support for ↓ fuel load
- Better targeting / reprioritising of funds.

3. How ppl can contribute?

- Yes: willing to contribute

4. How can your vision be financed? / Supported

- Being proactive – not waiting for grants
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- Better targeting / reprioritising of funds

1) Reflections

- * - it is fantastic but ~~models~~ there needs to be a business component.
- Don't have tourism without community and no tourism without environment → it's all intertwined.
- Do we need to be approaching Traditional Owners?
 - ↳ are they being included in the decision making?
- Communication - is there other ways to share information with people eg email/flyers.
 - ↳ one method does not work for everyone.
- * - Connectivity in various forms is paramount.
- * - Connection with Pomonal needs to be improved
 - ↳ stronger connections.
- * - The activities focused on connection initially was very important and made a difference.
- The community did a great job in communicating outside of Halls Gap about what was happening
 - ↳ the media information was misleading.
- Graham's emails were fantastic. The emails were human and informative.

2) Personal vision

- Halls Gap needs a media plan. or the ICC media needs to be more transparent.
- Better equipment for community meetings/media in an event.
 - eg hearing loop.

1) Reflections

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- Better equipment for community meetings/media in an event.
 - o e.g. hearing loop.
- (arrowed note) community media – assign a team – localised information

(2) / (3)

- An enduring group/work that continues in between the event

- Recognisable groups that are determined before events, utilising the existing groups - upskilling and getting the groups pre-prepared.

- Need to capture the next generation

- Communication channels that can connect to everyone
→ absentee landholders, past residents,
→ central point of communication

Note: Fill the Gap is not accessible on a mobile. It needs to be formatted differently and more user friendly.
□ People don't know that

- Welcome pack for new residents

(4) Data management - Pat

Flyers - Melissa

Landcare, Roadside, Botanic Gardens - Martin

Sugar / Swimming - Ange

2 / 3

- An enduring group/work that continues in between the event
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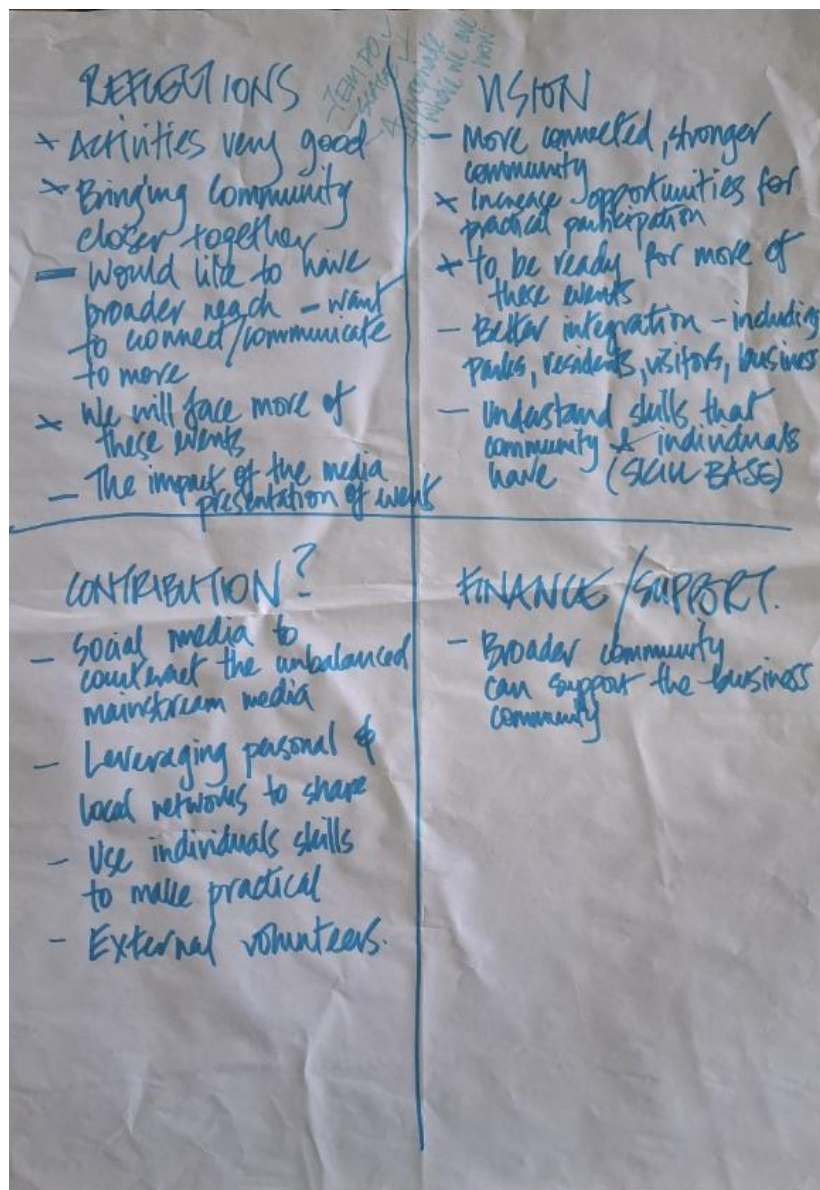
4

- Data management - Pat

- Flyers - Melissa

- Landcare, Roadside, Botanic Gardens - Martin

- Sugar / Swimming - Ange



REFLECTIONS

- Activities very good
- Bringing community closer together
- Would like to have broader reach – want to connect/communicate to more
- We will face more of these events
- The impact of the media presentation of events

VISION

- More connected, stronger community
- Increase opportunities for practical participation
- To be ready for more of these events
- Better integration – including parks, residents, visitors, businesses
- Understand skills that community & individuals have (SKILL BASE)

CONTRIBUTION?

- Social media to counteract the unbalanced mainstream media
- Leveraging personal & local networks to share
- Use individuals' skills to make practical
- External volunteers

FINANCE / SUPPORT

- Broader community can support the business community

Appendix F - About Happy Changemakers

Thank you for inviting us to facilitate the Community Forum and work with the Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet and community on this project. Jodie Willmer and Rob Nagy are the Co-Founders of Happy Changemakers, a division of Changemaker Associates Pty Ltd. After living in Melbourne for most of our lives, we moved in 2017 to Eagle Point, East Gippsland.

We are partners in life and business and have successfully worked together for over 10 years.

Happy Changemakers was recommended by a member of the Mallacoota and District Community Recovery Association (MADRA), a current client of ours, to the Halls Gap Kitchen Cabinet as suitable experienced facilitators for the Bushfire Recovery Community Forum.

With over 500 small businesses and community organizations supported through recovery and resilience programs, Happy Changemakers brings deep expertise in economic and community recovery and disaster preparedness.

Our extensive experience in working with local government, combined with a pragmatic and data-driven approach, ensures that this review will deliver actionable insights that support Northern Grampians long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability.

We've worked with many communities in and including East Gippsland Shire Council during recovery from the Black Summer 19/20 Bushfires, helping them build stronger connections and navigate the challenges ahead and be empowered to advocate on the needs of their communities.

We also have vast experience in establishing and transitioning community recovery committees, incorporated associations, company limited by guarantee (CLGs) and auspice arrangements with other not for profits (including ones with DGR status) and working with community groups to secure pro bono legal advice and other skilled services.

We have also completed successful projects using a Place Based and trauma informed approach, building on the strengths and ties that already exist within communities.

Happy Changemakers is a proud supporter of the East Gippsland Winter Festival with provision of pro bono strategic advice and a partner of East Gippsland Marketing Inc. (EGMI).

Resilient Ready podcast episode about small business bushfire recovery:

<https://resilientready.org/podcasts/episode-3-local-recovery-resilience-needs-local-capabilities-in-governance/>



Jodie Willmer



Rob Nagy

Thank you!

For further information please contact...

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<https://www.facebook.com/happychangemakers>

