

COBARGO UNITES TO BUILD BACK DIFFERENT

Volunteers in the Cobargo region have invited the not-for-profit Australian Business Volunteers to assist the development of several funding proposals to “build back better and smarter” after the fires that destroyed part of the village and devastated the surrounding region on New Year’s Eve.

Business and community discussions about recovery began soon after the fires but Covid restrictions put a stop to large meetings. This work continued in smaller face-to-face groups using online live-streaming to reach a larger number of residents.

A number of key projects have been identified through this process.

The major infrastructure projects are the re-development of the Cobargo CBD precinct that was destroyed in the fires; the Cobargo Bushfire Resilience Centre; the Cobargo Showground Community Hall and disaster refuge; and a community driven holistic landscape plan to transform Cobargo into a vibrant place with inspiring green spaces. Linking all these projects is a proposal to use renewable technology to improve energy resilience and security in Cobargo and Quaama, with a possible community micro-grid.

With the assistance of Australian Business Volunteers (ABV), the Cobargo project teams are now refining the project details and budgets ready for submission to the NSW Government on 11 December for funding under the NSW Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. This work is being supported by the National Australia Bank, other private companies and the Cobargo community itself.

Deb Summer, convenor of the Cobargo Community Catch-ups, and Shona Taranto, President of the Cobargo Quaama Business Recovery Group welcomed ABV’s help.

“ABV will facilitate an important round of community consultations from 10-12 November. Whilst there has been a lot of consultation on recovery projects already, we want to ensure that all those who wish to have a say have the opportunity to be heard,” said Deb.

“The offer from ABV of pro bono services couldn’t have come at a better time. The funding guidelines have only just been issued and we have just five weeks to finalise the submissions,” said Shona.

“Our community groups have done a lot of work to develop these recovery projects but the grants processes are complex. We’re also 11 months post-disaster and fatigue is setting in.”

“We are excited to be assisting Cobargo in this important work,” said Liz Mackinlay, CEO, ABV. “The NSW grant guidelines require the rapid development of an integrated approach to Cobargo’s recovery and resilience planning. This plan will help the different funding sources in

government, the private sector and the philanthropic sector, understand how the variety of projects fit together and complement each other.”

The collaboration between Cobargo and the ABV came about through links between the directors of Cobargo Folk Festival and the Yass Celtic Festival.

“The Cobargo project teams are now at the sharp end of the recovery and resilience funding process,” said Zena Armstrong, Director of the Cobargo Folk Festival.

“The long-term economic sustainability of Cobargo, and its future resilience to natural disaster, depends upon us pulling out all stops to win this government funding. It’s a highly competitive process, which is why we invited ABV and their networks to assist us in this final sprint to the finish.”

Like so many who have helped Cobargo recover from these fires, ABV volunteers are donating their time.

Each of the project teams are keen to stress that this process is not the end of the community consultation - there will be more opportunities for community input even after the submissions have been presented.

The community is invited to participate in a whole-of-community consultation to discuss these projects on the afternoon of Thursday 12 November at the Cobargo Showground Pavilion from 11-2pm.

Project teams will also be participating in the forthcoming community event, ‘Out of the Fires’ Plant Give Away and Fun Day, Saturday November 14th 2020 at the Cobargo Showground. This will be an opportunity to see the project plans and talk to the project teams.

About ABV:

ABV is an Australian-based development agency with a unique focus on strengthening business and economic institutions with a vision of alleviating poverty through inclusive economic growth.

For more information <mailto:cqbrgroup@gmail.com> and info@cobargofolkfestival.com

Shona Taranto
President
Cobargo Quaama Business Recovery Group Inc

Zena Armstrong
Director
Cobargo Folk Festival
President
Cobargo Community Bushfire
Recovery Fund Inc