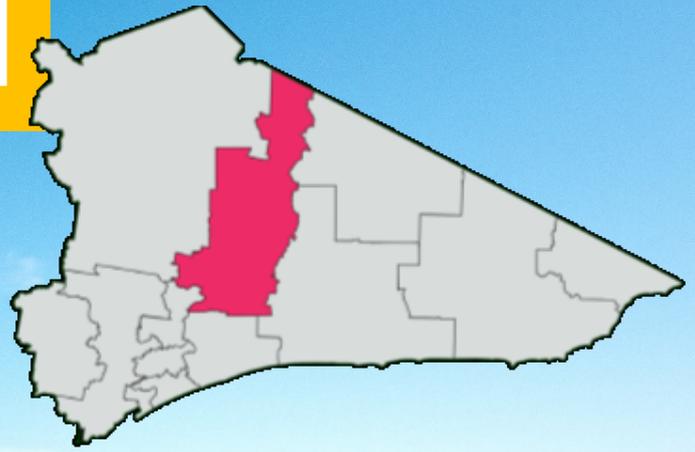


BUCHAN

BETE BELONG NORTH
BLACK MOUNTAIN
BUCHAN
BUCHAN SOUTH
BUTCHERS RIDGE
GELANTIPY
GILLINGALL
GLENMORE
MURRINDAL
SUGGAN BUGGAN
TIMBARRA
W TREE
WULGULMERANG
WULGULMERANG EAST
WULGULMERANG WEST



*Buchan's greatest resources are its **pristine natural environment** and, a circle of **volunteers** who support a cohesive and **vibrant community** and newcomers to the area who bring **new ideas** and **enthusiasm** to expand the scope of what can be achieved. This mix of people combine to give this district a **unique character**.*

(Buchan and Districts Community Plan 2017-2021)



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Community Vision



The newly formed Buchan Gelantipy & Districts Renewal Association coordinated a community survey during 2020 in response to understanding

community needs. A specific question on the community's vision identified the following words for the future vision. A formalized vision will be

prepared as part of the Buchan Community Renewal Plan, which will soon be developed.

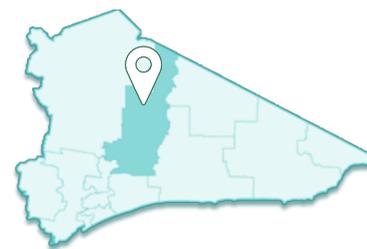
Tourism Vibrant Progressive Healthy **Prosperous** Sustainable Community
Progressive Healthy **Community** Safe Sustainable
Sustainable Vibrant Welcoming

Community Survey October 2020

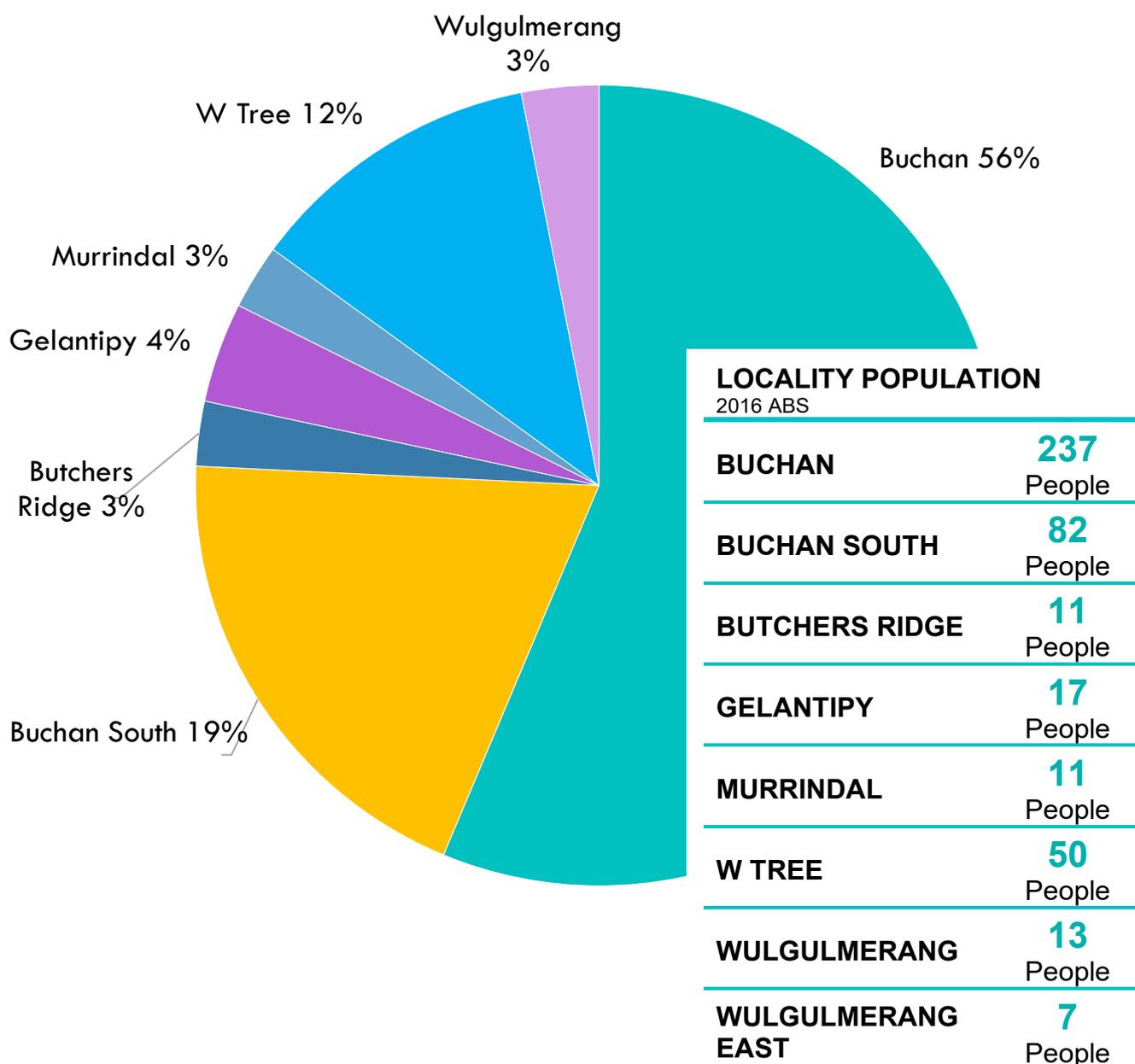
IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE NAME **BUCHAN** WAS TAKEN FROM AN ABORIGINAL WORD **BUKKAN-MUNGIE**, TO WHICH VARIOUS MEANINGS HAVE BEEN ASCRIBED. ONE INTERPRETATION IS 'PLACE OF GRASS BAG' AND ANOTHER IS 'PLACE OF ROCKS WITH HOLES'.



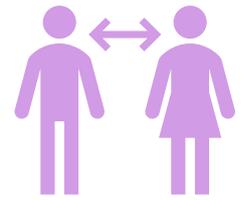
The District



	Buchan District	East Gippsland
Land area total	225,441 ha (2,254km ²)	2,093,053 ha (20,931km ²)
Council land area	6 ha	
Crown land area	180,640 ha	
Private land area	44,795 ha	from Community Survey October 2020



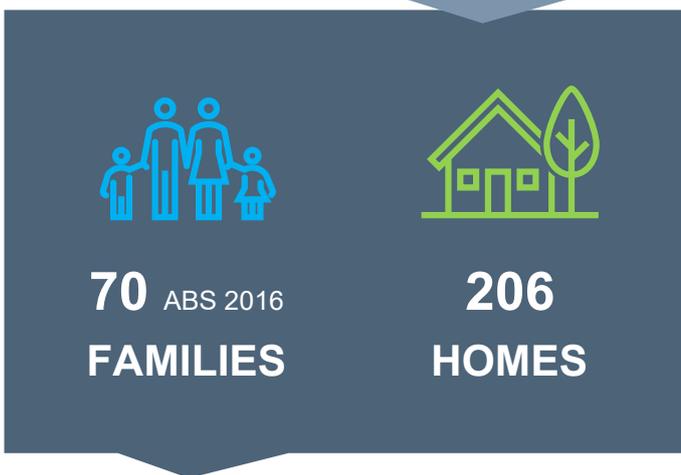
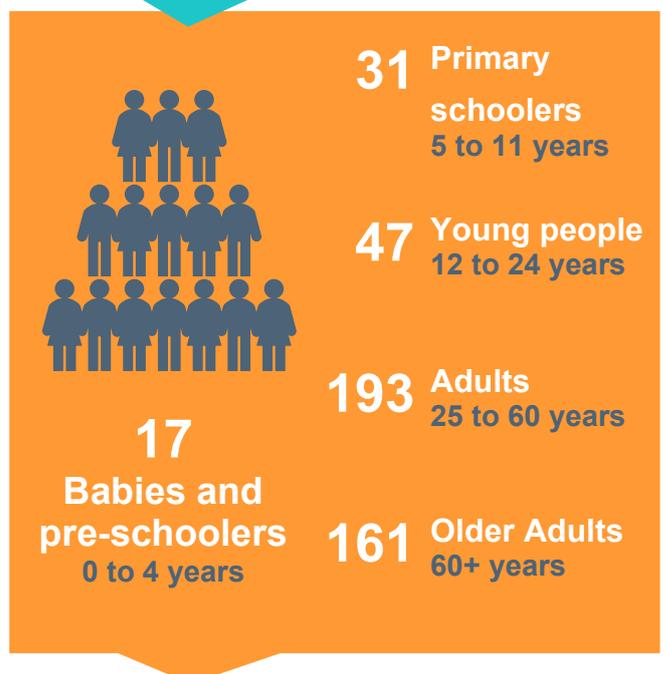
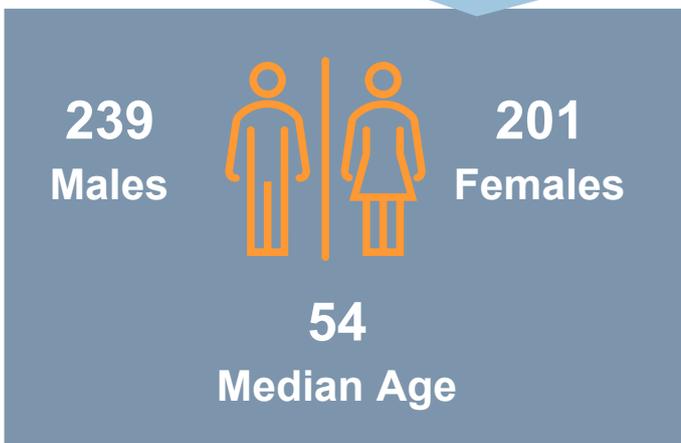
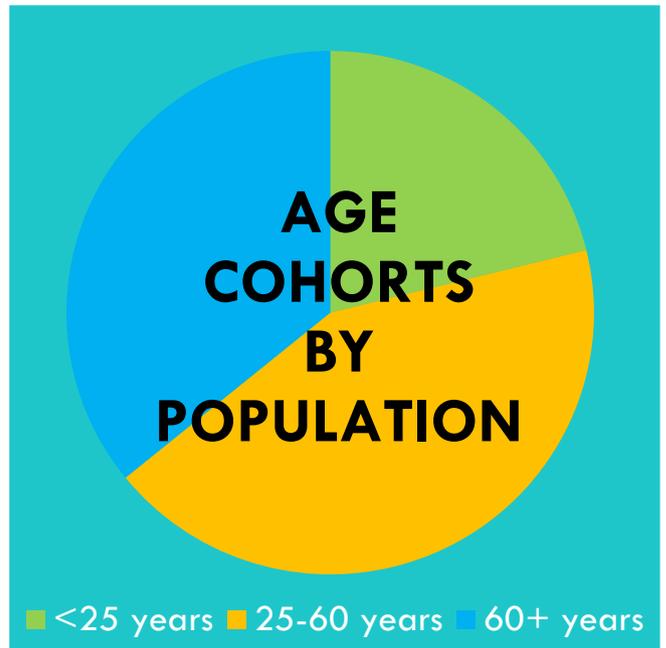
Our People



Identity and Diversity

16 people 3.4% EG 2.9%
Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander

11% 10.8% EG
Born overseas



Housing



Households	Buchan	East Gippsland	HOUSING ABS 2016
Families with children	19%	20%	
One-parent Families	8%	8%	
Couples without children	30%	32%	
Lone-person households	32%	28%	

DWELLINGS

261 Total dwellings Change from 284 (2011)	206 Occupied dwellings Change from 203 (2011)	1.99 Average household size Change from 2.12 (2011)
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AFFORDABILITY

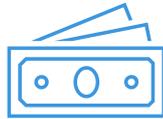
\$86 Median weekly rent	8% (EG 12.5%) Low levels of households in mortgage stress in East Gippsland	
20% Houses with a mortgage	0% (EG 33%) Low levels of household rental stress in East Gippsland	
\$218 Median weekly mortgage	77% Respondents are happy about their housing situation - Community survey 2020	
14% Households renting		

Thriving Economy



\$720

Median weekly household income



199

Employment population [change 230 in 2011]



40%

The highest proportion of low-income households in East Gippsland



4.1%

Lower unemployment level than East Gippsland average of 6.4%



3%

Low level of high-income households [2nd lowest behind Cann Valley]



44%

Highest rates of youth unemployment in East Gippsland [EG 12.8%]



51%

Can access a range of sports



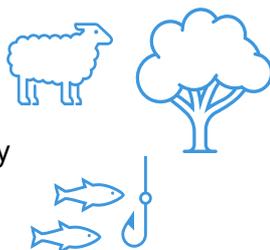
5.6%

Senior (55+) unemployment rate [EG 5.2%]



31%

More Buchan residents worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing than any other industry in 2016 [EG 9%]



Significant decrease in employment from 2011 to 2016 in -

- mining (-9)
- manufacturing (-8)
- agriculture (-6)
- arts and recreation (-5)

“If farmers aren’t making money, neither are the local businesses”

– local Buchan retailer

54.5%

Higher than average participation in paid employment (15 years+) Declined from 65% (2011) in participation EG [47.9%]

24%

One of Highest rates of youth disengagement (no education or employment) EG [12.8%]

Thriving Economy



The primary employment sector in the Buchan District is agriculture (sheep and cattle). The economy was therefore impacted during years of sustained drought. The service industry including health, education, public administration and safety employs around 50 people, but some of these jobs be outside of the Buchan District. Other significant

employers which are Parks Victoria in peak times employ up to 37 people, mostly locals, with a baseline staff of around 24 people. The retail and hospitality sector is also a significant employer. Buchan Quarry has around 10 employees. The District also has Niche economic ventures such as a school camp (twelve employees), SIBA; - a Tibetan

Buddhist Centre; organic fruit and vegetable production; an award winning garlic farming (ONTOS), food cooperatives (Murrindal and Sunrise) and home of WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). The last of the local timber mills closed in 2017. Resulting in a significant loss of local jobs

Beyond the current economic story for this district are the opportunities that the community hopes to pursue.

The community knows that the economic assets that it has at its doorstep are ready and waiting; it just needs support to investigate and translate these assets into a sustainable long-term offering.

Opportunities include:



- Expanding the day visitor experience; giving tourists more than a day of things to do and see so that they stay overnight.



- Tapping into the nature-based tourism experience such as fishing, kayaking and rafting, horse-riding and bushwalking.



- Creating a story (brand) for the Buchan District which may include the megafauna story, cultural connection to the landscape and the indigenous history.



- Embellishing the Gippsland Hero Experience is the Buchan Caves. Creating greater on-park visitor offerings as well as a caving experience beyond the reserve.

37% of respondents stated that the key challenge the district has had over the last 10 years has been the lack of employment.
Community Survey 2020



Healthy & Sustainable Environments



The Buchan District is home to some of the most unique and diverse landscapes and ecology in Victoria. Eighty percent (1806km²) of this district is Crown land designated as state forest, national park or similar natural area reserve. Of note is the **Buchan Caves Reserve** and **Snowy River National Park**.

The natural beauty, spectacular limestone-rich valley and hills, waterfalls and gorges speak for themselves. A visit to this district takes you to the junction of the iconic Snowy and Buchan Rivers (Balley Hooley), Little River Gorge, Tulloch Ard Gorge, and Basin Creek Falls amongst many other environmental attractions. There are pristine

wilderness areas including Alpine Ash and rain-shadow Cypress Pine woodlands.

The Buchan Caves Reserve showcases the Buchan-Murrindal cave system which was carved **400 million years ago**. There are hundreds of documented caves across the district.

Part of the key natural assets include vulnerable and endangered flora and fauna species including **Powerful Owl, Hooded Robin, Spotted-tailed Quoll** and **Growling Grass Frog** and **Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby**. The Limestone Blue Wattle (also known as Buchan Blue Wattle) is endemic to this district (and Lake Tyers)

and the Leafy Greenhood is one of the most significant populations in Victoria.

The Black Summer Fires has had a greater impact on biodiversity than any other fire event for this district. Stands of Limestone Blue Wattle were destroyed in the fires.

While some are naturally regenerating, Parks Victoria and the local Landcare group are initiating the regeneration through planting and seeding especially in the Buchan Caves Reserve. Similarly, agencies are working with landholders in the north of district to re-instate critical koala habitat which was significantly depleted during the bushfires.

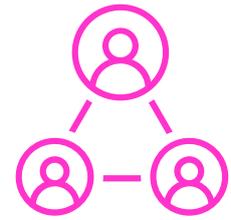
Overwhelmingly, the respondents of the Community Survey said the key opportunities for this district relate to the natural environment.

“I would like the district to be thriving again with eco-tourism and sustainable farming and bush/forestry industries”

The Buchan Gelantipy and Districts Community Survey in 2020 directly asked respondents what they valued most about living in the district. The greatest response (41%) was the environment (including the bush, fresh air, space, caves, beauty and farming). The local community has a significant connection to this environment.



Healthy, Resilient and Connected Communities



Much of the premise of the Community Survey undertaken in 2020 was around the theme of social connection. Understanding the social fabric of the community allows community

leaders and representatives to make informed decisions and tailor advocacy where it is most needed.

The respondents said:

82%

get a **sense of belonging** from living in the district

46%

agreed that the **health and wellbeing** of the community is strong; meaning people are healthy and prosperous. **13%** disagreed



89%

agreed that their **community is a safe** place to live

36%

disagreed that they could access a range of **arts and cultural activities** within the Buchan District. **32%** were satisfied that they could access them



69%

believe that the Buchan District has a **defined identity**

51%

an access a range of **sports and recreational opportunities** within the Buchan District



67%

agree that the community is **connected and inclusive**; and everyone feels welcome

SEIFA 951

One of the states most disadvantaged regions

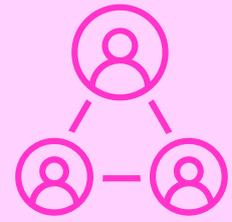
(EGS 958, Regional Vic 977, Vic 1010)

[ABS Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas]



Local Buchan kids enjoy a Family Fun Day in March 2021

Healthy, Resilient and Connected Communities



EDUCATION

1%

University attendance

22%

Trade qualification

10%

University qualification

50%

Highest district with no qualification – (EG 43%) Equal to EG averages for university qualified 10% (EG 11%) and trade qualified 22% (EG 23%)



ACCESS AND TRANSPORT

Public transport to work 0%

SERVICE PROVISION

Services based in the district -

- Buchan Bush Nursing Centre
- Gelantipy Bush Nursing Centre
- Buchan Police Station
- Buchan Primary School
- Buchan Kindergarten
- Buchan Neighbourhood House including EGSC Outreach
- Buchan Post Office







Cultural Connection to the District

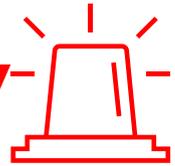
First Nations people, the **Gunaikurnai** have a connection to this district that stretches back tens of thousands of years. The Country of the **Krauatungalung** cover the area around Buchan and Buchan River, the Snowy River and up to Black Mountain.

The **Buchan Caves** area was an important meeting place during seasonal migration. The Buchan Caves is now a jointly managed reserve between the Gunaikurnai and Parks Victoria. New Guinea Cave in **Snowy River National Park** is also jointly managed. These caves are one of the oldest inhabited caves in the world.

In 2021, a significant **grindstone** was found at Cloggs Cave near Buchan. This discovery is of significant because of microscopic remnant **Bogong Moth** which filled an archaeological gap in the role Bogong moths played in the diet of previous generations of Gunaikurnai.



Emergencies and Community



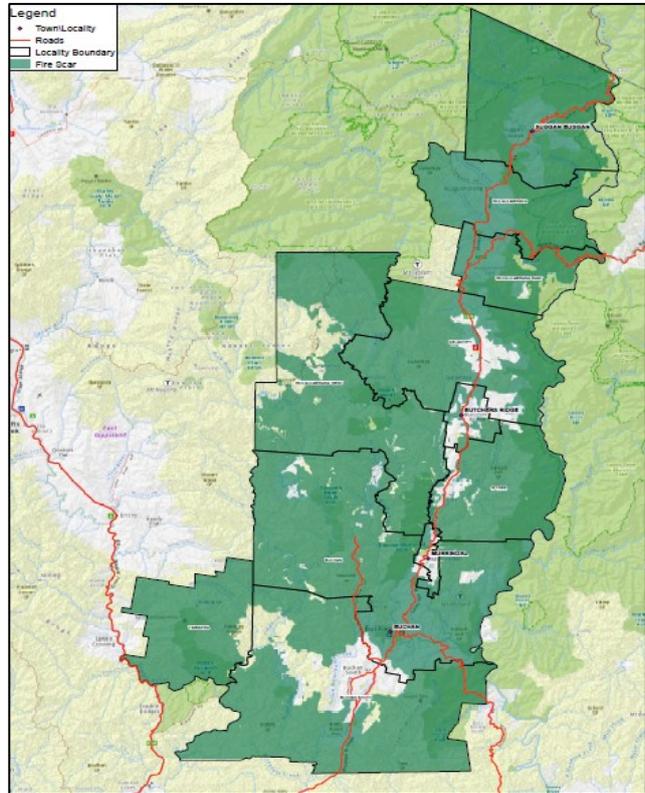
Safety

Fire is a regular occurrence across the Buchan District. Since 2003, there has been fire in the landscape in 16 of those years; fire of varying intensity, volatility and consequence. In many of these years, resources have been available to suppress impacts on the natural environment and freehold land. In 2003 and **Black Summer** these communities fended for themselves. This map provided by DELWP shows the **fire scar** (dark green) across the Buchan District for all fires since 2003. While **88% of the district has been impacted** by fire, over the last 18 years 364% has been burned; that is the same patches of land are impacted by fire multiple times!

With this bushfire, the community desire is to “have half a chance” (participant – Gelantipy Community Conversation 30 November 2020). Building a system of *individual preparedness* is essential. This must be supported and complemented at the community level with infrastructure that is reliable and capable of withstanding regular and severe bushfire events. With this being a normal part of life, communities need to be able to recover independently and in their time. This builds confidence, community capacity and true resilience.

Unfortunately, fire isn't the only natural disaster that this district experiences. Given the topography and catchments of Buchan, **flooding is regularly experienced** in and around the Buchan Township. Flooding events are magnified after significant vegetation and habitat loss in catchments post bushfire events like Black Summer.

Significant community infrastructure, like the **Buchan Caves Reserve** and **Buchan Recreation Reserve** (pictured, right) suffer the greatest impact.



It may be a matter of time until this facility is lost more permanently given the high-velocity water that travels through the reserve.

The impacts include damage to infrastructure, loss of participation in the sporting season, volunteer fatigue, loss of or interruption to employment (Caves Reserve). Community facility provision must allow for community's to flourish and connect and do what they do best – provide social opportunity and healthy participation rather than being a burden on their wellbeing and finances.



Volunteerism



A high number of local people volunteer – 35% (EG – 25%) but this is on the decline from 42% in 2011 (EG 25%).

The table on the following page outlines the current community groups across the Buchan District.

Due to the low population of this district, volunteer groups manage or maintain many community facilities and community groups. The same people often volunteer across multiple committees.

Volunteerism is on the decline due to several factors, including the aging population, declining population, busy lives, governance and the burden of administration.

A volunteer availability and succession plan must be drawn up to ensure the ongoing management and maintenance of community facilities in Buchan District.



Volunteerism



Community Committee/ Volunteers	Facility Management and/or Maintenance	
	Yes	Facility
Buchan Gelantipy and Districts Renewal Association		N/A
Buchan CFA	✓	Buchan CFA Shed
Buchan SES	✓	Buchan SES Shed
Gelantipy CFA	✓	Gelantipy CFA Shed
Buchan Recreation Reserve CoM Buchan Football and Netball Club Buchan Cricket Club Buchan Pony Club Buchan Tennis Club	✓ - - - -	Buchan Recreation Reserve
Buchan Kindergarten Parents and Friends	✓	Buchan Kindergarten
Buchan Bush Nursing Centre	✓	Buchan Bush Nursing Centre
Gelantipy Bush Nursing Centre	✓	Gelantipy Bush Nursing Centre
Friends of Buchan Caves Reserve	✓	Buchan Caves Reserve
Buchan Landcare		N/A
Buchan Arts Council		N/A
W Tree Progress Association		N/A
Buchan and District Heritage Group	✓	Old Butter Factory
Buchan Neighbourhood House	✓	Buchan Neighbourhood House
Buchan Mechanics Hall	✓	Buchan Mechanics Hall
Buchan Primary School Parents Association	✓	Buchan Primary School
Gelantipy Progress Association		N/A
Gelantipy Hall	✓	Gelantipy Hall
Wulgulmerang Sports Ground	✓	Wulgulmerang Sports Ground
Buchan South Avenue of Honour	✓	Buchan South Avenue of Honour
Buchan Rodeo Committee	✓	Buchan Rodeo Grounds
Buchan Valley Golf Club	✓	Buchan Valley Golf Club
Buchan Gun Club	✓	Buchan Rifle Range
Buchan Cemetery Trust	✓	Buchan Cemetery
Buchan and Gelantipy Racing Club	✓	Canni Creek Racecourse
Religion	✓	Anglican Church
	✓	Uniting Church
	✓	Catholic Church

Black Summer and Beyond



THE FIRES

Fire started in the Buchan District on 21 November 2019 with three lightning strikes across the landscape.

Fire moved around the north of the district for a month, impacting private property in late November at W Tree and Butchers Ridge.

On 29 December, eight further lightning strikes occurred around Gelantipy, Wulgulmerang and Suggan Buggan.

Weather spike days saw the removal of resources from this district and assigned elsewhere, such as Mallacoota.

On Monday 30 December 2019, the weather was deteriorating across the Buchan District, as it was across all of East Gippsland.



There was fire all over the landscape. The Buchan Township Protection Plan was activated with work divided between DELWP and CFA – a

crew of one strike team and one unit who actively patrolled the area. Fire impacted the Buchan township from three directions on this Monday night.

The fires were moving too quickly, so the key assets of the Telstra tower, Caves Reserve Visitor Centre, business precinct, Orbost Buchan Road (as far as the school) and township water supply were prioritised.

Given these widespread impacts, the community swung into the relief effort and the recreation reserve was activated for respite with the pavilion opened for people to come together and escape the smoke that engulfed the township.

Throughout the height of the emergency around 150 community members (their ages ranging from 6 weeks to 84 years), firefighters and other critical personnel sheltered at the recreation reserve as the assembly point.

The community, CFA and DELWP crew saved the school, churches, communications tower, pub, motel, hall and recreation reserve. While they also protected the Caves Reserve Visitor Centre, other significant infrastructure was destroyed.

While the township of Buchan and vicinity processed what had just happened, fires in Buchan South and Murrindal took hold on 5 January 2020.

A combined effort of farmers and fire fighters managed to reduce fire impact in these localities with a coordinated community effort making a difference actively protecting individual properties.

The final cleanup of fire came after two months of fire in late January 2020 around Buchan South.

The Impacts

- 2 People sadly lost their lives
- 44 dwellings destroyed or damaged (not habitable) and 2 damaged but habitable
- 3 dwellings destroyed in the town of Buchan
- 96 sheds destroyed; 1 shed damaged
- Agricultural businesses severely impacted. Estimates of fencing destroyed 1000km; stockyards and machinery loss unquantified.
- Minimal stock loss (due to three preceding years of drought and subsequent de-stocking)
- Every locality was fire impacted from Timbarra (94%) to Suggan Buggan (8%)
- Community facilities flame impacted – Canni Racecourse, Buchan Valley Golf Course and Wulgulmerang Sports Ground
- Tourism assets flame impacted – Buchan Caves Reserve (guides' room, cave entries, heritage trees, walking tracks, campground), Snowy River National Park, access roads such as Buchan Bruthen Rd and Buchan Orbost Rd
- Tourism accommodation impacted – Caves Reserve 2 cabins and 5 wilderness retreat tents and 2 privately owned on farm accommodation venues. As so many residences were impacted, other tourism accommodation venues have become residences for displaced residents
- The fragility of the utility system was highlighted.
- Power was lost early in the event. This resulted in the following happening:
 - No flushing toilets at assembly area (water was bucketed out of the river)
 - No air conditioning – too smoky to be outside and too hot to be in the pavilion
 - Reticulated water supply including community standpipe being inaccessible once generator fuel ran out
 - Telecommunications being lost once the backup generator fuel supply was consumed
 - No fuel supplies as roadhouse didn't have a back-up supply
 - Personal food supplies being spoiled due to no refrigeration
 - Limited food supplies for fire fighters and other personnel



“We packed everything and left home and went to the recreation reserve. Read the conditions and stayed in Buchan township for a couple of days”

Participant in the Buchan Community Conversation



LOCALITY	Total Area (Ha)	Burn Area (Ha)	% Burned
Timbarra	15257	14326	94%
W Tree	15655	13874	89%
Gelantipy	24730	20780	84%
Buchan	42959	33364	78%
Buchan South	43048	33250	77%
Butchers Ridge	3250	1656	51%
Wulgulmerang East	9694	4797	49%
Murrindal	1493	686	46%
Wulgulmerang	15331	4993	33%
Wulgulmerang West	36440	10618	29%
Suggan Buggan	23811	2010	8%

44 Dwellings destroyed or damaged / not habitable

2 Dwelling damaged but habitable

96 Sheds destroyed

1 Sheds damaged



The Recovery



Buchan District was the first flame-impacted community to establish a community recovery committee. On 2 March 2020, the inaugural meeting of the Buchan Gelantipy and Districts Renewal Association (BGaDRA) was held. BGaDRA has stayed focused from its inception to helping their community get back on its feet. Advocacy has been significant, and the committee has demanded that a place-based focus must be maintained. The association has consistently ensured the Buchan context; the Buchan story and the local people are heard.

While the committee has been successful in attracting some recovery investment, the focus has been on gathering the evidence and understanding the community needs from Buchan South to Suggan Buggan (90km apart). This has taken time. In lieu of having a final Community Renewal Plan, the committee adopted three priorities which; based on survey responses and previous community plan actions, which were used to create an interim priority plan.

These three priorities are:

- A Tourism Destination Plan
- A playspace
- Upgrade Buchan Recreation Reserve

These priorities are being worked through but are not without challenges. Buchan is a very complex landscape to work within given the topography and availability of suitable land to be developed for community facilities. The community looks forward to working with Council in resolving some of these issues.

This community is feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in its recovery. The social fabric of this community is strong and vibrant. The ability to connect is, however, broken and inconsistent. The thought of having fun can feel burdensome and consequently energy to make 'things' happen. The ability to gather as a community is critical to moving forward. The community needs to have hope.

“We chose the term ‘Renewal’ in our name to show us striving for betterment. Recovery indicates that we will get to the point where we were before the fires, and we don’t want that. We want betterment for our community”

Committee member March 2020



Points of Significance



The Buchan Gelantipy and Districts Renewal Association has made a commitment from the outset to have **productive and honest relationships** with government agencies, recovery organisations and other interest groups in order to generate a community-led recovery process.

This community **values connection and sense of community**. It is committed to its population and their future.

Its desires a sustainable population, affordable housing and access to meaningful and secure employment.

This community **values its natural environment**, the peace and prosperity that the land provides them. It strives to be involved in determining the future management of the landscape. It is committed to the long-term protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

The people of the Buchan District desire betterment.

The community hopes to see, in both the recovery and future phases, well-planned projects that meet their needs.

They desire investment that attracts families to move to the district, encourages tourists to stay longer, reduces burdens on the community and creates infrastructure that can withstand environmental extremes.

