

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE

The Bellarine Community Support Register Committee and all our Volunteers wish you a safe and enjoyable Christmas and festive season.

We look forward to supporting you and your families in 2021.

Our volunteers will be taking a small break over the Christmas and New Year period, so our Office will be closed from Thursday 24 December, 2020 and re-open on Monday 11 January, 2021.

To contact the Register, please phone **0480 228 674** during Office hours 9.30am – 12 noon, Monday to Friday, or email bpsupportregister@bigpond.com



IS YOUR LETTER BOX KEEPING YOUR MAIL SAFE?

Mail theft is becoming increasingly common. Unfortunately, most people don't know their mail has been stolen until they discover someone is using their credit cards or their identity. Not all letter boxes are created equal, so we share our top tips for making sure yours is protecting your mail.

1. Put a lock on your letter box

Only around 1 in 5 people lock their letter boxes. If you're among the other 80%, the simplest thing you can do is to buy a lock for it. Even a sturdy padlock may be enough to deter a thief. If your mailbox has a lock, but it's been there forever, you don't use it, or have lost the key, now's the time to upgrade it.

2. Don't rely on the lock that came with your letter box

Most locks that come with your standard letterbox are easy for thieves to open. They either use a master key or a key that matches the code stamped on the lock. If the lock is poor quality, they can usually pick, jiggle or force it open. Replace it with a high security lock.

3. Get a strong, high security letter box lock

Arrange for a locksmith to install a specialty letter box lock. These locks are harder to force open, are pick-resistant, don't have a master key function and don't have a number stamped on them. If you're nervous about losing the key, ask your locksmith to supply an extra one.

4. Make sure your mail fits

Make sure your letter box is the right size for the volume and shape of mail you receive. Get one that's large enough to allow your postie to insert your mail all the way in, so it doesn't stick out. The mail slot should be big enough for your mail – ideally A4 width – but small enough to keep thieves' hands out.

5. Clear your mail

An overflowing letter box can be an open invitation to a thief, so try to empty it at least once a day. If you're going to be away for a while, ask a trusted neighbour to clear your letter box daily, or arrange for Australia Post to hold or redirect your mail. A "no junk mail" sticker may also help. Alternatively, you may consider renting a mailbox at your local post office.

PROMOTING OUR REGISTER

The Register Committee will be undertaking some promotional activities in coming weeks. We will be having an information display at markets on the Bellarine Peninsula to promote registrations.

If you have friends who may benefit from the service, please encourage them to register with us. They can go to our website - <https://bellarineregister.org.au/> and complete an online registration.

They may register in person at our Market promotional events at:

Portarlington Lions Market on 27 December, 2020 or 24 January, 2021

OR

Ocean Grove Rotary Market on 3 January 2021 or 7 February, 2021.

Our friendly volunteers will provide you with information and can assist you to complete the Registration form.

The Register may also be contacted by phone on 0480 228 674 to find out more information or to obtain a registration form.

If you are visiting one of the markets listed above, come along and say hello to our wonderful volunteers.

GRANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our Register has welcomed some extra funding recently in the form of two grants.

A grant of \$1,700 under the City of Greater Geelong COVID 19 Quick Response Community Grant program has funded the printing and mailing of the September issue of our newsletter.

A Supplementary Volunteer Grant 2020 from Volunteering Victoria to the value of \$3,340.00 will go towards upgrading some IT equipment.

CHECK OUT THESE SCAMS BEFORE CHECKING OUT

Today, it almost feels like the online shopping world has been carefully curated for each of us. And in some way, it's true. Advertisers and social media platforms know so much about us, that it feels like they're sometimes listening in.

While online shopping is fun, easy, and super accessible, in the last few years, there's been a huge amount of fake retail websites that offer products that look enviably good and offering them at suspiciously cheap prices. Scammers love the ease of online shopping too, and they're willing to go to great lengths to get you to checkout.

Online stores

Shopping online is fun, especially when you can do it at home on the couch! It's important to understand the difference between a legitimate shopping experience, and one designed to scam you out of your money.

Here are a few tips:

Check the web address for the store – eg. Lego's URL includes lego.com

Make sure the store has a refund policy.

Be wary if the store doesn't have an easily read physical street address.

Check the store website is secure – it's web address needs to start with "https" and the site should have a closed padlock symbol in the URL bar.

Never send money or give credit card details to anyone you don't trust, including the websites you browse.

Be wary of online ads that offer huge discounts for popular brands. They often send a very poor-quality version of the item you've been coveting.

Online marketplaces

Facebook Marketplace has boomed in popularity. And Gumtree continues to host a wonderful array of second-hand items you can get your hands on at low prices. Make sure you're being vigilant when buying from one of these online marketplaces.

Here are some tips:

When buying on Gumtree or Facebook, use a secure online payment facility like PayPal, rather than cash or direct deposit.

If meeting a buyer/seller in person, choose a public spot that is well-lit, and take someone with you.

Don't pay for an item upfront via direct deposit or wire transfer.

Online shopping is a great experience for most of us but stay aware of the hidden scams so you can ensure your items always arrive, as described. Enjoy the bargain hunting!

Courtesy of Neighbourhood Watch Victoria

SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION – PORTARLINGTON ROAD, CURLEWIS

A reminder to residents who travel on the Portarlington Road at Curlewis that the speed limit on the road, from Grubb Road to Curlewis Road, has been reduced to 80 km per hour.

Quite a number of drivers seem to ignore this new speed limit. Police do patrol the area at times and a number of motorists have been caught exceeding the speed limit.

Similarly, other roads on the Bellarine have also had speed limit reductions including the seasonal change to 50km per hour between Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads.



SEVEN THINGS TO DO AT HOME BEFORE YOU GO AWAY ON HOLIDAY

Summer is the peak season for home burglaries and fire danger. So before you head off for a break, there are a few key things you can do around your home to give you that extra piece of mind while you're away.

1. Try to organise a house-sitter.

Crooks scoping out places to rob look for homes that appear unoccupied. So the best solution is to get someone you trust to house-sit for you while you're away. Ask family, friends or work colleagues if they know of anyone suitable who might be a willing house-sitter. Always meet the person beforehand, ask for references and get them to provide a CrimCheck.

2. Recruit a neighbour to create activity around your home.

If you can't get a house-sitter then asking a neighbour you trust to help make your place look active while you're away, is also a great idea. Ask them to do things like water your garden, open and close blinds, clear out your letterbox, park their car in your driveway, hang clothes on your washing line and put your wheelie bins out, and bring them in again, on bin day.

3. Consider investing in a smart camera that interacts with your phone,

While security cameras and CCTV alone, are more useful for catching burglars, than preventing them from breaking in, wireless camera doorbell systems which you can interact with via your smartphone, can be handy. If someone rings your doorbell, while you're hanging out on the beach, you get a notification on your phone, can see live video of who it is via the app, and can even talk to them, making it seem like you're at home. Check out the great range of wireless security systems available through our partner RACV.

4. Set up timers for your lights, radio and television.

Setting up timers to turn lights, a radio or your TV on and off at relevant times during the day and evening, can help make it seem like someone is at home. Try to set them to times when those rooms and appliances are usually being used. And mix it up if you can. Talk stations are better than music stations. Many modern homes have smart systems which allow you to program this sort of thing. Or you can get a range of 24/7 timers at your local hardware store that plug into your standard electrical power points.

5. Secure skylights, access holes and pet doors

Opportunistic thieves will look for sneaky ways to enter your house, if they're confident you're not at home. Burglars have been known to squeeze through pet doors, enter through skylights or gain access via the manhole in your roof. Always make sure these can be secured from the inside with keyed locks, lockable bolts and toughened glass.

6. Clean out your gutters.

A well prepared home is more likely to survive an ember attack from a nearby grass or scrub fire. Take time now to clean your gutters of leaves and twigs, install metal gutter guards and repair missing or damaged tiles on your roof. Even urban areas are at risk, particularly those near grasslands or bush. The CFA has more information on how to prepare your property for bushfire.

7. Check external sensor lights are working

Having external sensor lights around front and rear entry points, sheds and garages, can help deter a would-be thief. If you already have them, test them before you go away – make sure the globes and sensors are working and that they're lighting up the right area. If you don't have sensor lights, consider installing some around your front entry and driveway.

BELLARINE COMMUNITY SUPPORT REGISTER INC.
PO BOX 819, OCEAN GROVE. VIC 3226 TELEPHONE: 0480 228 674

DONATION FORM

NAME: ID NUMBER:

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I ENCLOSE A DONATION OF: Please circle the appropriate amount.

\$5 \$10 \$20 \$100 Other \$

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Receipts will be issued only on request. Please tick the appropriate box. YES NO

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Our account details are: BENDIGO BANK Branch 633 108 Account 127715209.

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