

BELLARINE COMMUNITY SUPPORT REGISTER INC.

December
2025
Issue 67



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello everyone,

My name is Gary Coombes and I am honoured to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Bellarine Community Support Register.

It's a privilege to take on this role and continue the important work of supporting residents across the Bellarine Peninsula to feel safe, connected, and cared for.

Our Register has a proud history of helping vulnerable and isolated community members through regular welfare calls from Volunteers, connection to local services and the support of our dedicated partners including Bellarine Police.

I look forward to working with our committee, volunteers and community partners to strengthen these programs and explore new ways we can assist those who need it most.

I extend my sincere thanks to the outgoing Chair, Jenny Speed and all who have contributed their time and energy to the Register's success. Together, we will continue to make a positive difference in the lives of people in our community.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you for your support throughout the year. I wish you all a safe, happy and restful festive season.

Garry Coombes
BCSR Chairperson

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

The Annual General Meeting of the Bellarine Community Support Register was held on 21 October, 2025.

We welcome Gary Coombes to the role of Chair for the coming twelve months and look forward to his input as the organization moves into its next operational phase.

Gary was the Officer in Charge of Bellarine District police in 2006 when the Bellarine Community Support Register was first set up and worked for two years to get it to a fully operational stage with the support of his Police Command.

As we enter the 20th year of service to the Bellarine community, it is fitting to have Gary as the Chair and acknowledge the thousands of residents, family members, pets, neighbours, friends and emergency service officers who have benefitted from its existence.

At the same time, we salute Jenny Speed as she steps down from the Committee having positioned the organisation to review its Volunteer Management structure and capacity in the coming months. Jenny remains with us as a Volunteer and has offered to assist the Committee with short term projects, if required.

We welcome our new committee:

Chair	Gary Coombes
Vice Chair	Leonie Saundry
Secretary	Carol Tozer
Treasurer	Lyn Codd

General Members

Glenys Francis
Cheryl Linford
Rhonda Rotherham
Alex Auletta
Christine Smith
Sandra Lea-Wood



Our Annual Report will be available online soon at:
<https://bellarineregister.org.au/annual-reports/>

Office Closure Dates:
12pm Fri 19 Dec - 9:30am Mon 05 Jan

YOU ARE PART OF OUR HISTORY

As we approach the 20th Anniversary of the Bellarine Community Support Register in October, 2026, we are bringing together a history of the Register.

A large part of our Register are the Registrants. Many of you have had regular contact with our volunteers through our Care Calls to you over a long period.

We know many of you are very appreciative of these calls as many of you have mentioned to our volunteers.

And then there have been occasions where our volunteers have been unable to locate you for your regular call – and there have been a number of stories around those occasions.

If you are willing to share such a story, or tell us what it means to you to know that we are here for you, drop us a line or give us a call and tell us.

To contact us, call our Margaret McLean on 0438 767 561 or email: bpsupportregister@bigpond.com

We would be very pleased to document these as part of our recording of our history of the Register.



PREPARE FOR FIRE SEASON

Have you started your property preparation for fire season?

The Country Fire Authority is urging everyone in Victoria who lives near dense forest, bush, grassland or the coast of the need to prepare their property for bushfire.

If you live in an area that could be impacted by grass or bushfires, preparing your property is essential to minimising the risk of damage to your property if a fire occurs.

Reducing the vegetation around your home is one of the most important things you can do to keep your home safe in a bushfire.

Do you have family, friends or neighbours who may need help preparing for fires?

Talk to them about when they will leave, where they will go and how you can help.

Have a plan, make sure your family knows it, and stick to it.

Don't hesitate when it's time to leave. You could get trapped by fire if you leave too late.

Prepare your property, protect your property.

For more advice, please visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au/prepare.



SURVEY RESULTS

Our annual Registrant survey highlights just how valued the Bellarine Community Support Register is within our community.

This year's responses were especially heart-warming, with many Registrants saying the service gives them peace of mind, a sense of safety, and meaningful social connection.

People shared that regular calls help them feel cared for, less isolated, and more secure living alone. They appreciate having someone to talk to, the genuine interest shown by volunteers, and the comfort of knowing someone is checking in.

Overall, the feedback clearly shows that our care calls provide significant emotional support—not just to Registrants themselves, but also to their families who take comfort in knowing their loved ones are safe and connected.

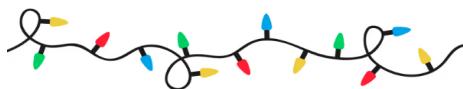


LOOK AFTER YOUR PROPERTY AND YOURSELVES

Register for Urgent but Non-Life Threatening Care through the Virtual Emergency Department.



<https://vved.au/self-registrations>



With Christmas approaching, residents who will be away from home for an extended period are encouraged to complete an *Absence From Residence* form.

You'll need to provide your contact details, the dates you'll be away, and the details of a person who can be contacted during your absence.

You can register online via:

- the Victorian Government's Online Reporting service service.vic.gov.au,
- calling the Police Assistance Line on 131 444, or
- by downloading the form from police.vic.gov.au/absence-residence and taking it to your local police station.

Before leaving, make sure your home is secure, have someone check on the property, and store valuables safely.

The message also reminds residents to prepare their properties for the fire season.

Anyone living near bush, grassland, dense forest or the coast should reduce vegetation around the home and have a clear bushfire safety plan.

Support neighbours or family who may need assistance. More fire-preparedness information is available at cfa.vic.gov.au/prepare.



SPANNER ON ALERT

Now getting on a bit, Spanner loved nothing more than spending time with Peter in the shed on their Wallington property.

It was their quiet world – sawdust in the air, half-built kitchens waiting for final touches, neighbours dropping by for a chat, and the rabbits and butterflies outside left to go about their business undisturbed.

But on this particular day, a summer thunderstorm rolled suddenly across the Bellarine. The air thickened. The sky cracked. And Spanner, ever alert to the smallest change in Peter's breathing, sensed that something was wrong.

Peter's asthma flared sharply – far worse than usual. His wife was in Sydney babysitting for one daughter, while the other daughter was away house-sitting. It was just Peter and Spanner, alone as the storm crashed overhead.



Gasping for breath, Peter managed to dial Triple 000. When the ambulance arrived, the paramedics found him struggling to draw air, one arm wrapped protectively around Spanner to keep him calm.

Spanner stayed pressed against him, trembling but loyal, refusing to leave his side until help was ready to take over.

When the ambulance officer prepared to move Peter into the vehicle, Peter shook his head. Still breathless, he pointed to his little mate.

From his pocket he pulled out his Bellarine Community Support Register ID card and pressed it into the paramedic's hand.

The officer quickly contacted police, who were able to organise for Spanner's Pet Carer to come and collect him – allowing Peter to go to hospital without the fear of leaving his companion behind.

"Never thought I'd need it," Peter managed with a weak smile, relieved knowing that Spanner was in safe hands.

BELLARINE COMMUNITY SUPPORT REGISTER INC.

PO BOX 819 OCEAN GROVE VIC 3226 TELEPHONE: 03 5255 3968

DONATION FORM

NAME: _____ ID NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

I ENCLOSE A DONATION OF: \$5 \$10 \$20 \$100 Other: _____
Please tick the appropriate amount.

All donations of \$2 and over are income tax deductible.

Donations will be accepted at any Bendigo Bank Branch in the Geelong Region.

Our account details are: **BENDIGO BANK** Branch **633 000** Account **127 715 209**.

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