**Future Archives Transcript:**

**‘Manningham Bushfire Recovery Centre - News Report’ by Gillian Lever, Sophie Gleeson and Lisa Rae Bartolomei**

**Audio info:**
(7:12mins)

This news report aired on March 6th, 2026, on ABC News Victoria. Journalist Serena Carson visited the Manningham Bushfire Recovery Centre during the 2026 bushfires in Christmas Hills to interview Primary Care Officer Miranda Black.

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**[Indoor house soundscape]**

**[Evac Alert]**

Good afternoon, this is a Manningham Risk Alert

There is a high bushfire risk in your area and an evacuation is necessary. The fire danger rating is extreme. It’s time to connect with your community care circle and evacuate to the Manningham Bushfire Respite Centre.

**[/end Evac Alert]**

**Serena Carson:**

A sound that is familiar to anyone living in the many high bushfire risk areas in Victoria, the National Communication Network’s Fire Evac alert. Today, there’s a small difference to the alert here in Warrandyte. The NCN in Warrandyte and surrounds is directing community members to evacuate, not to a family or friend’s home as is the usual routine for Fire Evacs, but to the new Manningham Bushfire Respite Centre.

**[Outside Evacuation Announcement]**

Please answer the following questions.

On. Are you in danger and in need of immediate aid?

Two. Do you require assistance transport to travel to the designated respite centre?

Three. Are you able to assist other community members that require aid?

Thank you

4 of 10 members in your community care circle have checked in as safe and cared for. One member Simon is safe but requires transport. Can you help Simon? Thank you, you will receive live updates on your smart phone about your community care circle as they check in. Please listen to your personalised evacuation steps.

Check if your immediate neighbours on your left and right would benefit from your assistance. Collect Simon. Take your pets to the Manningham RSPCA for temporary care and shelter. Go to the bushfire respite centre for temporary care and shelter.

6 of 10 members in your community care have now been checked in as safe and cared for. The directions to the Manningham Bushfire Respite Centre for temporary shelter and care have been loaded into your smart phone navigation system. A copy of your personalised evacuation steps has been sent to your phone.

**[End Outside Evacuation Announcement]**

**Serena Carson:**

After the horrors of the Black Summer of 2025, President Wong announced funding for states to find new methods of dealing with constant evacs for those living in areas prone to bushfire.

Newly elected Victorian Premier Ben Jenkins, of the Victorian Community Party, chose Miranda Black’s Bushfire Respite Centre as recipient of a sizeable funding grant. When Premier Jenkins spoke at the grant award ceremony, they described the Respite Centres as “paradigms of the community care future”.

**[Control Room soundscape]**

**Serena Carson:**

This is the control room here at the MBRC, and I’m here with Miranda Black, primary care officer of this centre, and instigator of the BRC model, which has been implemented in 10 Bushfire Respite Centres spread throughout the Yarra Ranges and Dandenong’s region as a pilot program. The goal is to build centres like this around the nation over the next 5 years.

Miranda, can you tell us more about what happens here in the control room, at the Care Centre of this facility?

**Miranda Black:**

Our database holds records of all Community Care Circle members in Manningham, and the software we’ve developed communicates directly with members’ smart home controllers to determine who needs help, and who is available to provide that help.

As you can see here, one of our members, Simon has responded to his home controller that he needed transport, so our algorithm contacts each member of his Community Care Circle to see who is available to help him out. He’s now been marked as safe and in transit, so he should be arriving here soon.

**Serena Carson:**

What was your inspiration for the idea of bushfire respite centres?

**Miranda Black:**

Growing up in Warrandyte, I’ve always been aware of the risk of bushfire. My aunt lost her home in the Black Saturday fires, and that really hit my family hard. She was lucky that she was able to evacuate in time and stay with family, but it made me think about all those people that don’t have a family to rely on. Each summer it seemed to get worse, with more people in my community needing to evacuate for several days or even weeks at a time. I saw the chaos and confusion and thought that someone needed to do something to organise everyone, so after the President offered grants for good ideas, I thought my idea’s time had come.

**Serena Carson:**

Miranda, what is your caring background?

**Miranda Black:**

I have never had the opportunity to work in care, unfortunately. I ran a small business for most of my life before the respite centres came into being. I am mother to two children, and I am also a certified wildlife carer, and I am also a member of Warrandyte’s Sustainable Weekenders group. We spend our weekends on environmental projects which aim to conserve the local green environment and reduce bushfire risk in our area.

**Serena Carson:**

Tell us about the services you have set up at this centre. I believe you have recreational and learning areas, as well as living areas set up, for those evacs lasting longer than a week?

**Miranda Black:**

Yes, we have living areas to house every member of our Care Circles here in Manningham, but because Evacs are tending to be longer each summer, it was important to me that these Centres have resources in place to make people feel the least amount of disruption to their daily lives as possible. When a school is included in an evacuation area, the teachers from that school hold classes here so that children’s’ education is not interrupted. We also have sporting facilities, board games rooms and a listening room for news updates and entertainment.

It’s so hard for people to be moved from their homes so often. I know that many people say that they are used to the routine of it now, and that others are moving out of the region, but not everybody feels that way. There are lots of people in our community who don’t have the means to move away from high risk fire areas, or who just don’t want to leave their community and their way of life behind, so for those people, it’s important to make their Evacs as comfortable as I possibly can.

**Serena Carson:**

Has there been any pushback to the idea of the centre, and how have people engaged with the work you are doing here?

**Miranda Black:**

Most of the locals I have spoken to were extremely happy about this facility. Before the respite centres, people were aware of members of their Community Care Circle who didn’t have a place to go, but weren’t always able to help out. A lot of people slipped through the cracks and just stayed in their homes throughout Evacs, despite the risks, and we’ve had some tragic stories over the years. I’m sure you remember.

There will always be people opposed to just about any idea you come up with, and this is no different. There was the expected hate online from groups like the New Libertarians, up in arms about the expense of the Centre. But apart from that, the response has been overwhelmingly positive, and people seem to be settling in well for this Evac so far!

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