The 2009 Victorian Bushfires

"After the Fires: from Relief to Reconstruction"

Christine Nixon

Chair Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority

7 July 2009



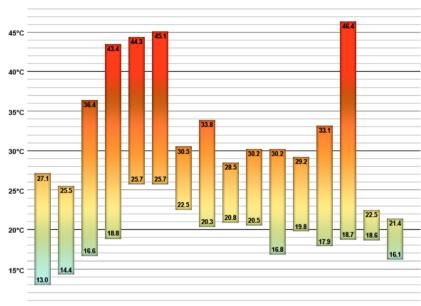
Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority

Extreme conditions up to and on 7 February put Victoria on a high level of alert

- Prolonged drought, with much of Victoria experiencing record low rainfall
- Sustained high temperatures in early 2009

>On 7 February:

- Most of Victoria experienced temperatures 12-18° above average
- Melbourne city recorded 46.4°C, its highest maximum temperature since records began
- A combination of strong and gusty winds, low humidity and record high temperatures led to extreme fire conditions



Minimum and Maximum temperatures

25 26 27 28 29 30 31 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Melbourne City January - February 2009



Fire behaviour was rapid and extreme

- Over 300 fires ignited across Victoria on 7 February
- Severe cool change exacerbated fire activity – 'worst situation you can have' (Kevin Tolhurst, fire ecologist, Uni Melb)
- Fires created energy equivalent to 1500 atomic bombs size of Hiroshima
- Fire spotting occurred up to 15km ahead of front (typically 1-2km)





A number of fire complexes were spread across the State

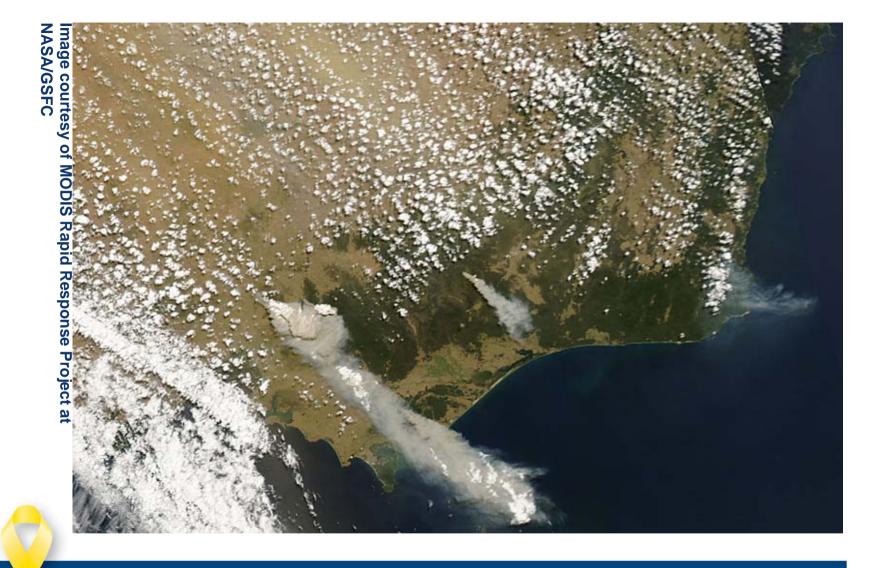
- Six main fire complexes: Bunyip, Kilmore, Murrindindi, Churchill, Eaglehawk and Beechworth
- Kilmore and Murrindindi merged into one complex, creating an active fire front of over 100km

Fires
 continued
 to burn
 until early
 March





We will rebuild

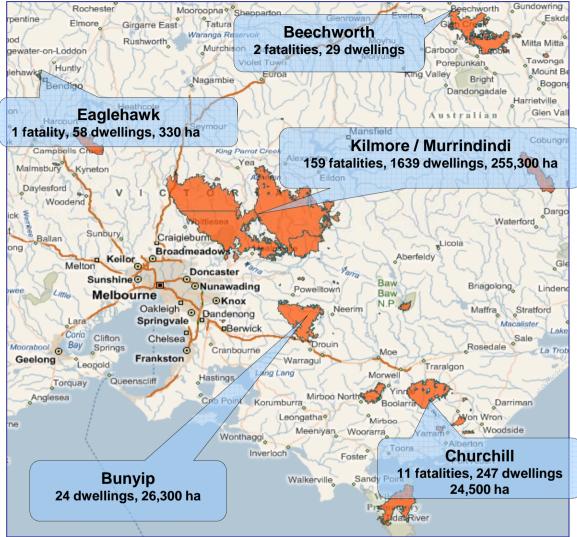


Satellite image of smoke plumes on 7 February, including column from Kilmore fire

We will rebuild

The fire impact

- > 173 people killed
- 2133 properties destroyed
- 78 communities in 25 municipalities
- 430,000 hectares burnt
- 8000+ stock losses
- 12,500km of fencing damaged
- Estimated 1 million+ of wildlife lost



We will rebuild

Responding to the disaster required multiple approaches – focusing on both immediate needs and the longer-term response

RESPONSE	Fighting Bushfires	Contained bushfires which continued to burn well after 7 February Supplemented emergency services with interstate and overseas support Firefighters provided from all other states
	Emergency Relief	Provided immediate emergency relief for those affected (medical; housing; counselling etc) Strong focus on case-management approach to 'individualise' dealings with governments and provide one point of contact Significant coordination between governments, and early decision-making
	Recovery and Rebuilding	Created the right structure to coordinate effective rebuilding and recovery Harnessed the overwhelming community response Appropriate inquiry and review procedures (legal and policy)



Recovery and Rebuilding

- Creation of Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (8 Feb) over \$341m raised, two thirds already allocated
- Established Royal Commission (announced 9 Feb)
- > Agreed with Commonwealth to the establishment of Victorian

Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority (10 Feb)

- Responsible for coordinating the largest rebuilding and recovery program in Victoria's history
- Four areas of focus: people and communities; reconstruction; local economies; and environment



The Authority's ramework guiding

2 People Safety, Health, Welfare. 5 Wellbeing Environment Biodiversitv Reconstruction and Ecosystems, Residential. Amenities. Local Commercial. Waste and Pollution Community Rural. Management, Public Buildings Natural Resources Economic Individuals. Business. Infrastructure. Government

The Authority is using a recognised disaster recovery framework and has designed some overall guiding principles

Recovery and reconstruction framework

Guiding Principles

to govern activities:

As a starting point for the framework the following guiding principles will govern the overall activities of the Authority through the recovery process:

Welfare

The safety and welfare of people in the local community including householders, volunteers and workers will be the top level priority and will not be compromised

Meeting Needs

Resources for recovery will be focused on areas of greatest need in each community

Community Engagement

Community involvement is key and will be pursued through all activities with management at the local level empowered to deliver results

Integrity

Provision of services and resources will be governed by the principles of fairness and equity

Tailored solutions

The needs of each community impacted by the fires are different and the recovery solutions will be tailored to the specific needs of each community.

Acknowledgements

The Government and people of Victoria are deeply touched and grateful for the generous and heartfelt support and assistance from the Commonwealth Government, our State and Territory counterparts, the people and businesses of Australia and from around the world.

