

MessageMatrix



Edition Number Seven 2009

Disclaimer: The information in this publication have been made available for general personal use only and is provided without any express or implied warranty as to its accuracy or currency

Royal Commission

Hearing Blocks 2 and 3 ran from August through to early October. These session began the task of looking at the fire related deaths, mostly in closed sessions. The commission also looked at causes of the fires, buildings, more on incident control and on and on...

There has been much activity in implementing the recommendations made in the RC's interim report, see below.

Fire Season

The official fire danger period began in Victoria on the 1st November.

Fires around the country

October was a busy month with northern NSW and QLD experiencing a number of substantial fires.

Tragically, one man died from a heart attack whilst defending his property.

Community Safety

This fire season brings with it changes, particularly in community safety. The CFA has released a whole stack of new community safety material, an online home assessment tool and new fire danger ratings. There is also movement afoot on community safer places and warning systems



Emergency Broadcasters

30 commercial broadcasters on 47 frequencies have joined the ABC as official emergency broadcasters in Victoria in the hope bushfire information will reach a broader range of people.

Breaking news on Bunkers

The Victorian Government has released interim regulations for private bushfire shelters. They are interim whilst a standard is developed. Anyone wishing to build a shelter now requires a permit. See www.buildingcommission.com.au to learn more.

Catalyst

The ABCTV science show, Catalyst, had a bushfire special. Check it out on iView at www.abc.net.au/iview

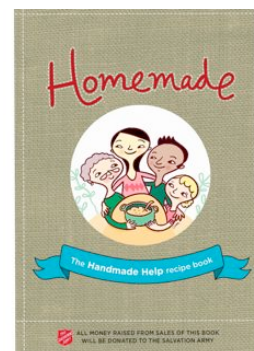
Fire in the Mind

This website aiming to develop discussion on all aspects of living with bushfire. It is new, but will be interesting to see how the forums develop. www.fireinthemind.com.au

Bushfire Cookbook

www.handmaderecipebook.com

The Homemade Help Recipe Book was developed by a group of crafters and artists who wanted to contribute to the Black Saturday recovery effort. All proceeds from the sale of the book go to the Salvation Army.



Enhancing Community Safety Outcomes

A rant by Amalie Tibbits

I have just completed the IAP2 certificate in public participation. This training went over 5 days and covered planning, communication and techniques. Here are some key points, a starter rather than a summary.

Community engagement (CE) is an integral element of successful bushfire management and safety programs. Essentially it is the vital ingredient for saving lives. If the community isn't engaged then they simply won't know what to do on the day. And the ramifications of this are all too well known.

The International Association of Public Participation is an organisation devoted to enhancing the quality and success of public participation programs. Their website www.iap2.org and its Australasian chapter at www.iap2.org.au provide countless resources for program developers (or just those who are interested).

Core values for the practice of public participation are:

- The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives.
- CE includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- CE promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and

interests of all participants, including decision makers.

- CE seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

- CE seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- CE provides participants with information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- CE communicates to participants how their input affect the decision.

Like anything, planning is a vital component of CE. It can seem time and resource extravagant, but in the end is likely to lead to a more successful program, making it money well spent. And when we are talking about community safety, successful outcomes are very important.

IAP2 identifies five steps for public participation planning:

- 1.Gain internal commitment
- 2.Learn from the public
- 3.Select the level of participation
- 4.Define the process and participation objectives
- 5.Develop the public participation planning document

Some of the benefits of a well planned CE program might include:

- Giving the community ownership of the problem and the solution;
- Better acceptance of decisions;
- Allow a better understanding of the issues (for both the community and service providers) through information sharing;
- Relationship building; and

- Creating resources which match the community and service provider's expectations

This list isn't exhaustive, but hopefully it will go some way toward seeing that CE can go beyond just community education. Experience shows that we can't just tell people what to think and how to act. To get people thinking and change behaviour, we as community engagement officers (for want of a better word) really need to see beyond public meetings.

IAP2 have a code of ethics too, which provides a set of principles to guide CE practitioners code of conduct. Things such as trust, integrity, honesty, openness and commitment are all there, as you would expect.

IAP2 has also developed a spectrum of public participation. The spectrum is non-hierarchical, acknowledges that different circumstances require different levels of public participation. The spectrum provides a guide to the level of CE required. This may be:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

I strongly recommend you all go out and investigate CE in more detail, whether or not you use it hands on in your job. It has a great deal of potential and to be successful needs to be understood and supported by everyone from the top to the bottom.

www.terramatrix.com.au

In the office...

Work Stuff

With Duncan away for two months (our two busiest months EVER) we have all been busy little beavers. Jon has done a sterling job of captaining the ship all on his lonesome.



Jon and Kayla taught two Wildfire Management Overlay Site Assessment Courses on behalf of the CFA.

The Wildfire Prevention and Preparedness Plans for Manningham City Council are well on the way. Not long now guys!

The first element of our work for Barwon Water is complete and we are eagerly heading into elements 2 and 3. More time in the Otways - yes please if it means swimming in the ocean.

The word according to Jon and the word is WMO

final stages.

And not to forget, rail preseason audits have begun, with Kayla and Jon cruising about the state talking with rail operators.

Our work with SPAusnet and Dromana Foreshore Reserve is in the

Upcoming work includes developing a number of Emergency Management Plans, WMO assessments, the rail inseason audits, round 2 of work with Manningham CC and a whole lot of time in the Otways.

New Skills

Nancy and Amalie attended a WMO site assessment course, and now have their fingers crossed that they will successfully gain the competency. It would be VERY VERY bad if they didn't.

Amalie did the final part of the IAP2 public participation certificate.

Terrafun

Nope, can't think of anything. We have been 'noses to the grindstone'.



No dog was harmed in the making of this publication, just slightly humiliated.

Planning and Building Update

The last edition of MM came out just after the release of a new practice note from the Building Commission. This issue is still misty, however many people are opting to just press on with their planning applications in the hope that by the time their building permit is due all will be clear. Fingers crossed.