

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires

“After the Fires: from Relief to Reconstruction”



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Authority**

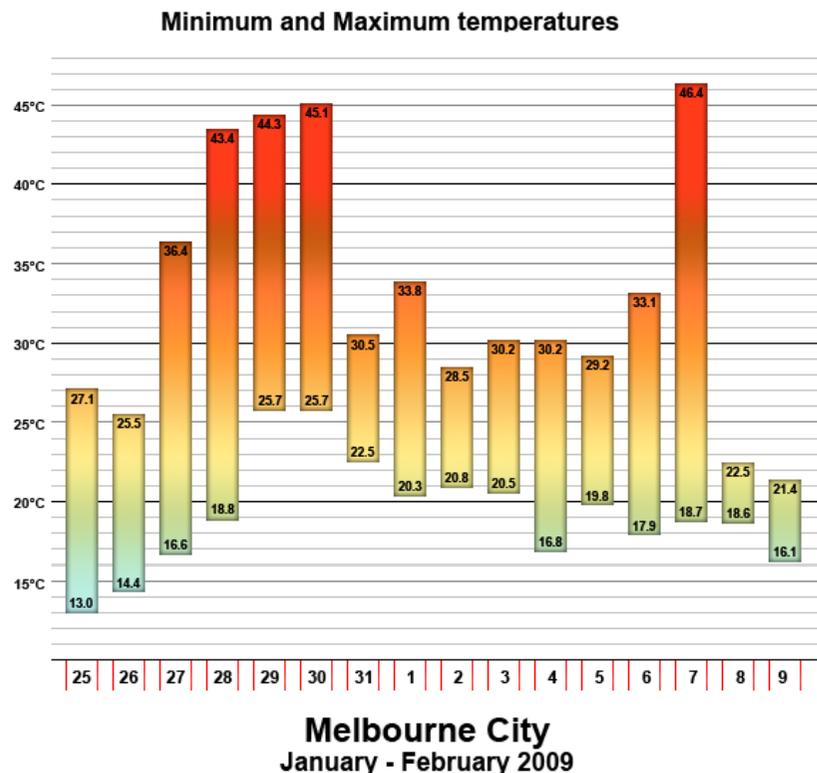
7 July 2009



**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



We will rebuild

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)



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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



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Image courtesy of MODIS Rapid Response Project at NASA/GSFC

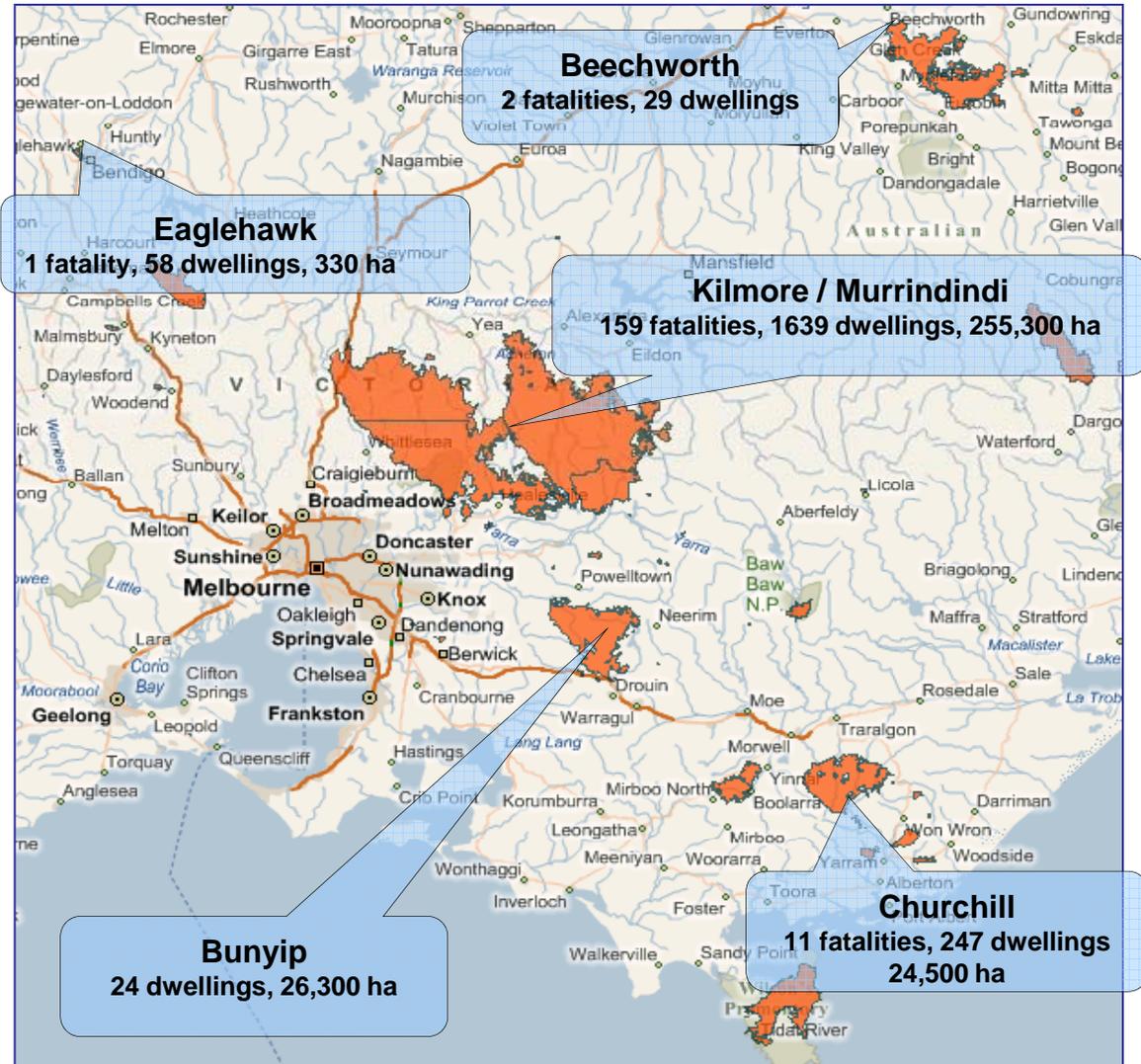


**Satellite image of smoke plumes on 7 February,
including column from Kilmore fire**

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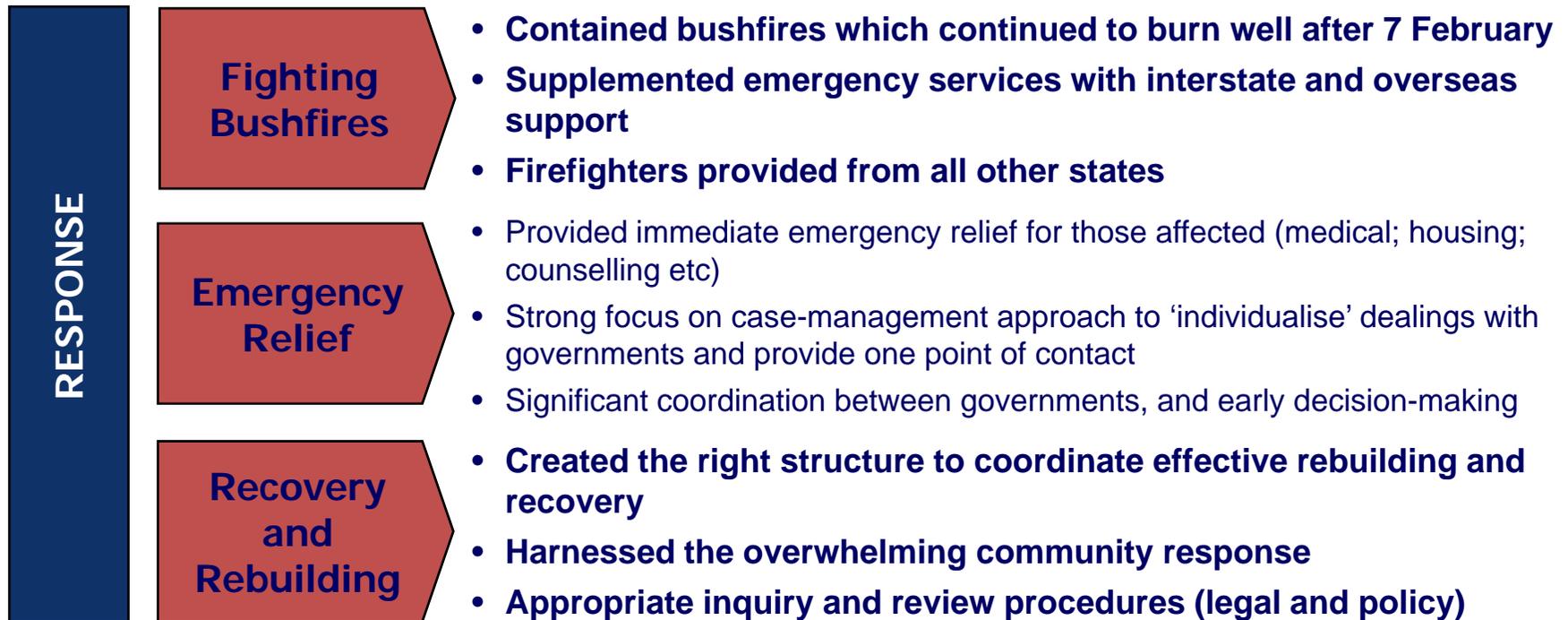
The fire impact

- 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



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



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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



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The Authority's guiding framework

Recovery and reconstruction framework

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



Guiding Principles

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.



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