

Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

In February, Premier Brumby announced the establishment of a Bushfires Royal Commission chaired by the Hon. Bernard Teague AO, supported by Commissioners Ron McLeod AM and Susan Pascoe AM. The Commission will deliver an Interim Report by 17 August 2009 with a Final Report due in July 2010. The MAV and 77 Victorian councils were granted unconditional leave to appear before the Royal Commission. The MAV's general submission to the Commission is available at www.mav.asn.au. Contact Emma Fitzclarence, 9667 5532, efitzclarence@mav.asn.au

Bushfire Rebuilding

The State Government has announced three new dedicated rebuilding services for bushfire-affected communities and \$2.5 million funding for community memorials in 19 municipalities. Two new Rebuilding Advisory Services will be built in Marysville and Kinglake to operate as one-stop shops for communities to access the full range of finance, insurance, planning, building and related information on the rebuilding process. A third visiting service will support affected communities in Gippsland, Horsham, Bendigo and the Yarra Valley. Funding was also announced for new Men's Sheds to be built in five bushfire-affected communities and the Premier confirmed council allocations for community memorials funded through the joint Federal-State *Community Recovery Fund* established following the bushfires.

Human Swine Flu Update

Following the Federal Minister's announcement last week of a new national 'Protect' phase, Victoria moved from 'Modified Sustain' to the new phase on 23 June to help reduce the impact of Human Swine Flu on the community. There is a continued focus on early treatment of people in high-risk groups; controlling outbreaks in high-risk setting like special schools and aged care facilities; increased surveillance through GP sites across the state; voluntary home isolation only for those with influenza; and continued monitoring and surveillance activities. There is no longer antiviral therapy being offered to those with influenza, or their contacts, unless it is clinically necessary. The DHS is consulting with MAV on a number of materials to assist local government undertake its community support role. Contact Emma Fitzclarence, 9667 5532, efitzclarence@mav.asn.au

MEMEG Update

The Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group (MEMEG) is a committee of local government and emergency services agencies that aims to support local government emergency management practitioners to ensure the sector is linked to emergency management strategy decisions at the State level. This year MEMEG has met twice. Key developments include:

- **Local government involvement and responsibilities in the recent bushfires**
The group identified a process for capturing lessons learned and identifying opportunities for improvements through four streams:
 - Involvement in the Department of Human Services debriefing process
 - Participation in the Office of Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC) led review of Emergency Management Manual Victoria Part 6 which outlines municipal level emergency management responsibilities
 - Participation in a planned OESC workshop which incorporates a review of the MECC operational guidelines
 - Participation in VICSES debrief on emergency relief operations
- **Regional MEMEG forums**
MEMEG and the MAV are working together to facilitate regional MEMEG meetings to ensure that all local government emergency management practitioners have the opportunity to feed into MEMEG. Councils in the Gippsland and Southern Metro regions have identified their Regional Chairs who have attended their regions' inaugural meetings. The Chairs will provide updates on regional issues and initiatives at MEMEG meetings.

Steve Pascoe has resigned as Chair of MEMEG after being in this role for three years. MEMEG thanks Steve for his continuing work in supporting the role of local government in emergency management. Theo Pykoulas, Maribyrnong City Council is the new Chair. For further information or to raise issues for consideration, contact Theo Pykoulas, 9688 0326, theo.pykoulas@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au or Lance King, 0407 842 807, lking@mav.asn.au.

MEMEG Forum

The last MEMEG forum was held on 27 March in Melton with the theme "Community Support and Recovery - Everyone's Business". Delegates heard from a range of speakers sharing their experiences, and initiatives developed to support and rebuild communities following disasters. Attendees were also updated on the current bushfire recovery effort. The forum was organised in partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner. Presentations will be available at www.mav.asn.au. To raise issues of interests or format for future forums or workshops, contact Theo Pykoulas, 9688 0326, theo.pykoulas@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au or Lance King, 0407 842 807, lking@mav.asn.au.

MEMP Audit

The MAV, VICSES, Department of Human Services and the Country Fire Authority are completing the review of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) audit questions that were trialed in the 2008 MEMP Audit Pilot program. The review team is looking at refining the set of questions to eliminate any duplication and will also be taking part in an externally facilitated evaluation of the pilot. Until the evaluation process is complete, councils will be given the choice to use the existing or new audit questions formats. Contact Lance King, 0407 842 807, lking@mav.asn.au

Disaster Resilience Australia

The Commonwealth Government announced in the Federal Budget 2009-10 that it will invest \$79.3 million to strengthen efforts to prepare for and respond to major natural disasters. The "Disaster Resilience Australia Package" will integrate the existing Bushfire Mitigation Program, Natural Disaster Mitigation Program, and the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund. The funding will:

- Support disaster mitigation works including flood levees and fire breaks;
- Assist local government meet its emergency management responsibilities;
- Support the work of volunteers in emergency management; and
- Build partnerships with business and community groups to improve their ability to respond to emergencies.

Further details will be available at www.ema.gov.au.

Emergency Management Conference

The Emergency Management Conference will be held from 20 – 22 July at Sebel Albert Park. The conference will run on the first two days, while the Diversity in Emergency Services stream breaks into three free workshops on the third day. To register or for a program, go to www.esf.com.au.

Equipment Funding

The Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) equipment funding program has now closed, with all councils that applied receiving funding to improve MECC operations. The MAV and MEMEG thank the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner for their support and funding in this undertaking.

EMMV Part 3 and 6

Part 3 (the State Emergency Response Plan) and Part 6 (Guidelines for Municipal Emergency Management Planning) of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) are currently under review and councils are invited to contribute to both reviews. The review of Part 6 is being led by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and an issues paper is currently being finalised that will discuss the roles and responsibilities of councils and other agencies at municipal level. Councils wishing to make a submission to the review of Part 3, which is being led by Victoria Police, should contact Emma Fitzclarence, 9667 5532, efitzclarence@mav.asn.au.

Leaders in IFMP Commit to Next Steps

With eight regional committees established and activity underway in several municipalities, Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) is building momentum, instigating a forum at MFB's Burnley Complex between regional committee chairs, state committee members and the support team. The forum's objectives were to build and share a common understanding of IFMP, build partnerships between the state and regional committees, and create a collaborative environment to foster the development of the project. The key outcome of the day was the commitment of regional committees to undertake an environmental scan to identify existing fire management plans, how they link and address any gaps in planning for improvement. Participants also agreed on the need to share lessons from municipal implementation throughout the local government sector.

Australian Safer Communities Awards

The 2009 Australian Safer Communities Awards recognise best practice and innovation by organisations and individuals who help build safer communities across Australia. The awards cover all aspects of emergency management – risk assessment, research, education and training, information and knowledge management, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery – and entry is now open to any organisation or individual. The awards are hosted in Victoria by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and are sponsored by Emergency Management Australia (EMA) in conjunction with states and territories. Entries close on 3 July. Further information is available at www.oesc.vic.gov.au.