

STATE SITUATION REPORT

1800hrs, 13/03/2014

INCIDENT / EMERGENCY NAME:	Gippsland Fires – Hazelwood mine fire and East Gippsland fires		
SITUATION REPORT NUMBER:	# 18	INCIDENT LEVEL:	2

SITUATION SUMMARY:

Situation Summary	<p>This report is focussed on the Hazelwood open cut mine fire in the Latrobe Valley and the bushfires in East Gippsland.</p> <p>The Hazelwood open cut mine fire was declared CONTROLLED on Monday 10 March. Remaining hot spots are being monitored and extinguished. The smoke from the fire remains and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is continuing to monitor the air quality in the Morwell area. The Chief Health Officer has maintained the current health advice for people 'at risk' to consider relocating from the affected area. This advice will remain in place as EPA continues to monitor air quality data for improvements.</p> <p>On Tuesday 11 March, the Premier and Deputy Premier announced the establishment of an independent Inquiry into the Hazelwood mine fire, to be headed by Justice Bernard Teague, AO.</p>
Known impacts	Smoke from the Hazelwood mine fire continues to impact on Morwell and other communities in the area.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

Health	<p>On Wednesday 12 March 2014, 23 clients attended the Community Health Assessment Centre. As at COB Wednesday 12 March 2014, there have been 1973 clients attend since the opening on 21 February 2014. (NOTE: this figure has been adjusted by an additional 20 clients that were omitted from the SitRep relating to 10 March and 11 March). The centre will continue operating until at least 30 March 2014.</p> <p>The Chief Health Officer (CHO) has endorsed a protocol for lifting the temporary relocation advice. The basis for a recommendation by the CHO to lift the temporary relocation advice, for reasons of health protection, includes the analysis of data and criteria provided by the EPA, BoM and information from the State Controller as to the fire suppression status. Once all the criteria have been met, the CHO will issue an advisory that the conditions are now safe for sensitive groups to return. This will also be subject to ongoing monitoring and review while fire continues to persist.</p> <p>A community fact sheet for health advice regarding the clean-up of properties has been approved and is available on the health website: www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood.</p> <p>General practices have reported increased presentations of patients with respiratory conditions however the load is being managed. General practices have requested to be advised well in advance of the closure of the Community Health Assessment Centre and some are concerned about the anticipated impact on the sector when relocated residents return to Morwell. The Department has addressed these concerns by providing advice back to general practices on these issues along with the clean-up advice they can distribute to patients. The Department continues to provide the health sector with current health advice and information.</p> <p>Overall presentations to Latrobe Regional Hospital are above average although it is not confirmed if these are attributable to the effects of smoke, and presentations from Morwell are low.</p> <p>The Nurse on Call (NoC) service has noted a small increase in demand and continues to be actively promoted within the community.</p> <p>Two DH staff are deployed to the Gippsland region to work in the Regional Health IMT.</p> <p><u>Ambulance Victoria</u> Presentations at the Community Health Assessment Centre are slowing. Resource levels are currently being maintained.</p> <p>The AV resources supporting the Goongerah fire have been stood down.</p>
Human Services Command	<p><u>Emergency management workforce</u> DHS staff continue to be deployed to Gippsland to assist with regional emergency management operations in response to the incident in Morwell. DHS staffing numbers for Thursday, 13 March 2014 were 88 in the Gippsland region and eleven at the State level.</p> <p><u>Clients and services</u> Impacts on DHS funded services and DHS clients are being monitored and regular contact is being maintained as required.</p> <p><u>High level summary report</u> The DHS hotline (1800 006 468) continues to take calls from the public seeking respite or relocation assistance.</p> <p><i>The following table contains a list of today's respite and relocation figures for the event:</i></p>

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

		<i>Past 24hr activity up until 16:30 today</i>	<i>Total event activity</i>
	Respite Calls	528	7,268
	Relocation Calls	75	1,512
	Appointments Made	427	5,498
	Appointments Attended	400	3,611
	Respite Payments	346	3,229
	Relocation payments (first)	7	663
	Second relocation payment	102	278
	Payments Rejected	0	26
	Accommodation arranged by DHS	0	4
	DHS has a fraud management process in place to assist in the prevention of funds being obtained inappropriately. Possible inappropriate access to payments have been referred to Victoria Police for investigation. Two referrals were made today.		
Relief (including relief partner agencies)	<p>Respite and Relocation Assistance Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Respite and Relocation Assistance Centre operated at the Greek Hall at 46 Elgin Street Morwell <p>Moe Respite Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 people attended today, 13 March 2014 (as at 15:30) Current staff resources include DHS, Council, Red Cross and personal support <p>Latrobe City Information and Recovery Centre, 22 Hazelwood Rd, Morwell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 people attended today, 13 March 2014 (as at 15:30) <p>Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Victorian Council of Churches continues to support outreach activities. Support to Latrobe City Council has been provided with the visitation of 4,500 homes as at 17:00 12 March 2014. Red Cross Register.Find.Reunite - 5,187 registrations of Morwell residents as at 15:45 13 March 2014. Red Cross staff are also present at the DHS respite and relocation centre to provide Register.Find.Reunite services 		
Recovery	<p>Recovery planning for the Morwell incident and other fires in the Gippsland region is well underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Operations and Recovery Briefing with Craig Lapsley, Regional Control Team, and recovery lead agencies took place today, where copies of the Recovery Plan and sub-plans were made available. These are draft and still subject to approval. Hazelwood Mine Fire Recovery Committee met on 11 March 2014. Clean Up Sub-committee met again today and will meet daily. Communications and Community Engagement Sub-committee met today. Social and Community Sub-committee met today. Two sessions were run by Rob Gordon, consultant psychologist, today focusing on communicating with affected communities. 		
Communications / Public Information	Key communication activities today include: preparing recovery communications and community engagement plan and attending to various media queries.		
Business Continuity	Nil significant for this report.		

ISSUES:

Issue	The Morwell community is experiencing levels of stress in relation to the ongoing environmental conditions.
Action Taken	DHS continues to provide respite and relocation payments and has implemented a range of community supports. Active planning is underway to transition to recovery. Country Fire Authority has formed a community advisory group which will transition to a community recovery committee.

OPERATIONAL STATISTICS:

RELIEF/ RECOVERY/RESPITE CENTRES

LGA	Location	Type of Centre	Hours/Attendees as at 15.30
Latrobe City	Moe Town Hall, Albert St, Moe	Community Respite Centre	9am – 6pm 5 people attended
Latrobe City	Community Information and Recovery Centre 22 Hazelwood Rd, Morwell	Community Information and Recovery Centre	9am – 6pm 30 people attended
Latrobe City	The Greek Hall 46 Elgin Street, Morwell	Respite and Relocation Assistance	395 appointments today
Latrobe City	Ambulance Victoria Gippsland Regional Office, 2 Saskia Way, Morwell	Community Health Assessment Centre	8am – 8pm

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (FOR THE EAST GIPPSLAND FEBRUARY FIRE EVENT)

Region and LGA	Number Emergency Grants	Total
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**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT**

Gippsland – East Gippsland*	45	\$30,500
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Region and LGA	Number Re-establishment Grants	Total
Gippsland – East Gippsland*	0	0
GRAND TOTAL		\$30,500

*Note: Payment summaries for both Latrobe & Wellington Shires are no longer included as the focus of the Situation report is now on the East Gippsland fires only, as well as the Hazelwood mine fire. Variations from previous Situation Reports are due to excluding Latrobe & Wellington Shires payments.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE – Latrobe City (as at 1630 hrs)

	Payments made today (as at 1630hrs)	Total Cumulative Payments	Cumulative Total
Personal Hardship Respite Payments	346	3,229	\$1,614,500
Personal Hardship Voluntary Relocation Payments (first payment)	7	663	\$635,750
Personal Hardship Voluntary Relocation Payments – second payment	102	278	\$273,000
TOTAL	455	4,170	\$2,523,250

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Location & LGA	DHS in attendance (Y/N)	Date	Time
Nil			

Next Sit Rep: The next situation report will be issued on Friday, 14 March 2014 at 1800hrs

Endorsed by:

Alan Hall, State Recovery Coordinator

Julian Meagher, State Health Coordinator