



State Operational Brief – overview

For bushfire and heat during 8 and 9 February 2014

1. SITUATION

Severe Weather Outlook

- **The Bureau of Meteorology has advised that this weekend is expected to be critical for fire weather with very hot conditions expected across the State on Saturday, little relief overnight with temperatures remaining in the mid-high 20's and then northerly winds strengthening ahead of a strong and gusty southwesterly wind change Sunday morning and afternoon.**
- Behind the change, wind gusts up to 50-70 km/hr are possible.
- Expect temperatures to return to +40 degrees in the western and central parts by next Wednesday.

Impact Prediction

- **Any fire that establishes itself on Saturday is likely to burn actively through into the early hours of the morning, and possibly all night.**
- For many hours on Saturday, across most of the state, new fires will become large quickly.
- Fires in open grassland will generally spread very fast but be controllable if sufficient ground and air resources arrive at the fire quickly. Any fire that gets into bushland or plantation is likely to stay uncontrolled for many hours.

Refer to separate document '**Readiness planning – fire behaviour risk assessment for Saturday 8 January 2014 & Sunday 9 February 2014**'.

Situation

- Existing fires in East Gippsland are very large and will continue to grow. In the absence of rain they will take weeks and large numbers of resources to control.
- Across most of the state grasslands and forests are very dry and ready to burn.

See current situation report.

2. MISSION

Undertake a strategic overview to ensure control can be exercised to respond to bush and grass fires.

The intent for the period is:

- Apply the state Control priorities to set strategic direction.
- Continue to suppress and secure any current fires.
- Rapid and aggressive first attack on all reported fires.
- Focus on firefighter safety and fatigue.

Safety

- After weeks of hard work many firefighters are weary. That increases the risks of accidents.
- Safety will be promoted, monitored and reported on at every level.
- Briefings will emphasise that focusing on safety remains everyone's responsibility and must remain front and centre for all individuals, teams and leaders.

3. EXECUTION

Command and Control

- State, regional and incident control is in place 24/7 for the entire period, with a focus of the day and night shifts to cover the period.
- A key issue for incident and regional controllers is to establish incident control by achieving 'transfer of control' at the earliest opportunity.
- For the period 1200 to 2200 there will be two Deputy State Controllers, to provide higher capacity to interface with the regions.

Incident management

- The incident control centres have been staffed at or above the JSOP2.03 requirements. The dynamic management of this plan is a responsibility of the regional controller and state controller.
- The State Controller has issued a reminder to clearly articulate the purpose, function and responsibilities of Incident Controllers and their incident management teams in relation to EAS paging, radio communications, and operational IT systems during periods of high activity.

See document 'Incident Management Communications – Concept of Operations'.

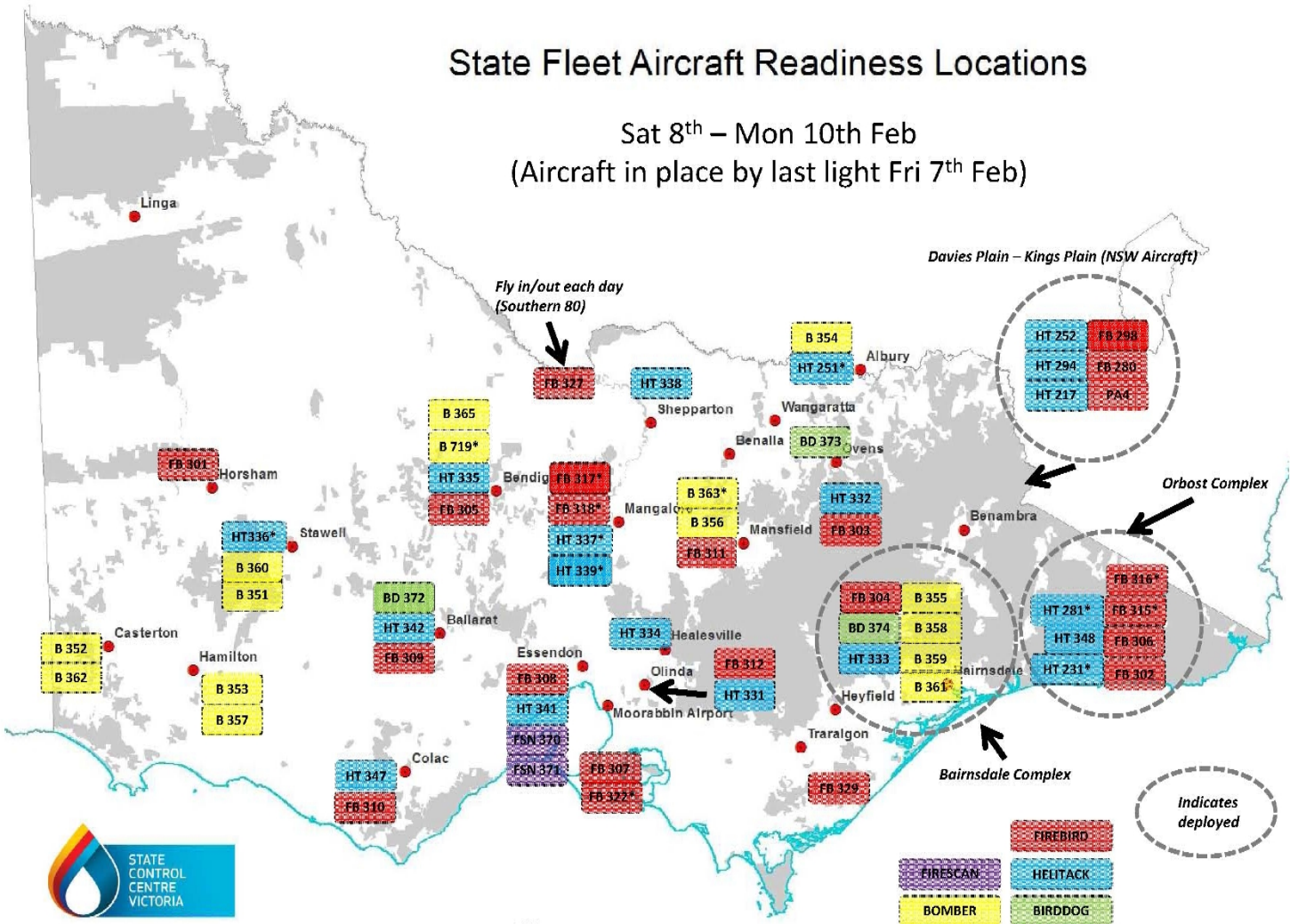
Aviation

- For the weekend further aircraft have been added to the state's aircraft fleet, taking the numbers to 54, above the normal base of 42. NSW is positioning a Type 1 helicopter to Albury.
- The aviation fleet will provide aircraft for current 'going' fires and readiness for the potential of fires for the weekend.
- The aircraft, including the new capability for airborne intelligence gathering (AIG), are positioned at the nominated bases, except for slight variations due to current fire activity
- The Gippsland fires continue to have significant commitment of aircraft, including nine helicopters and five firebombers, supported by an additional six aircraft provided by NSW each day.
- Aircraft are being positioned in relation to the weekend's three major public events.
- Possible cross-border arrangements with NSW and South Australia to increase surge capacity, in either direction, are under discussion.

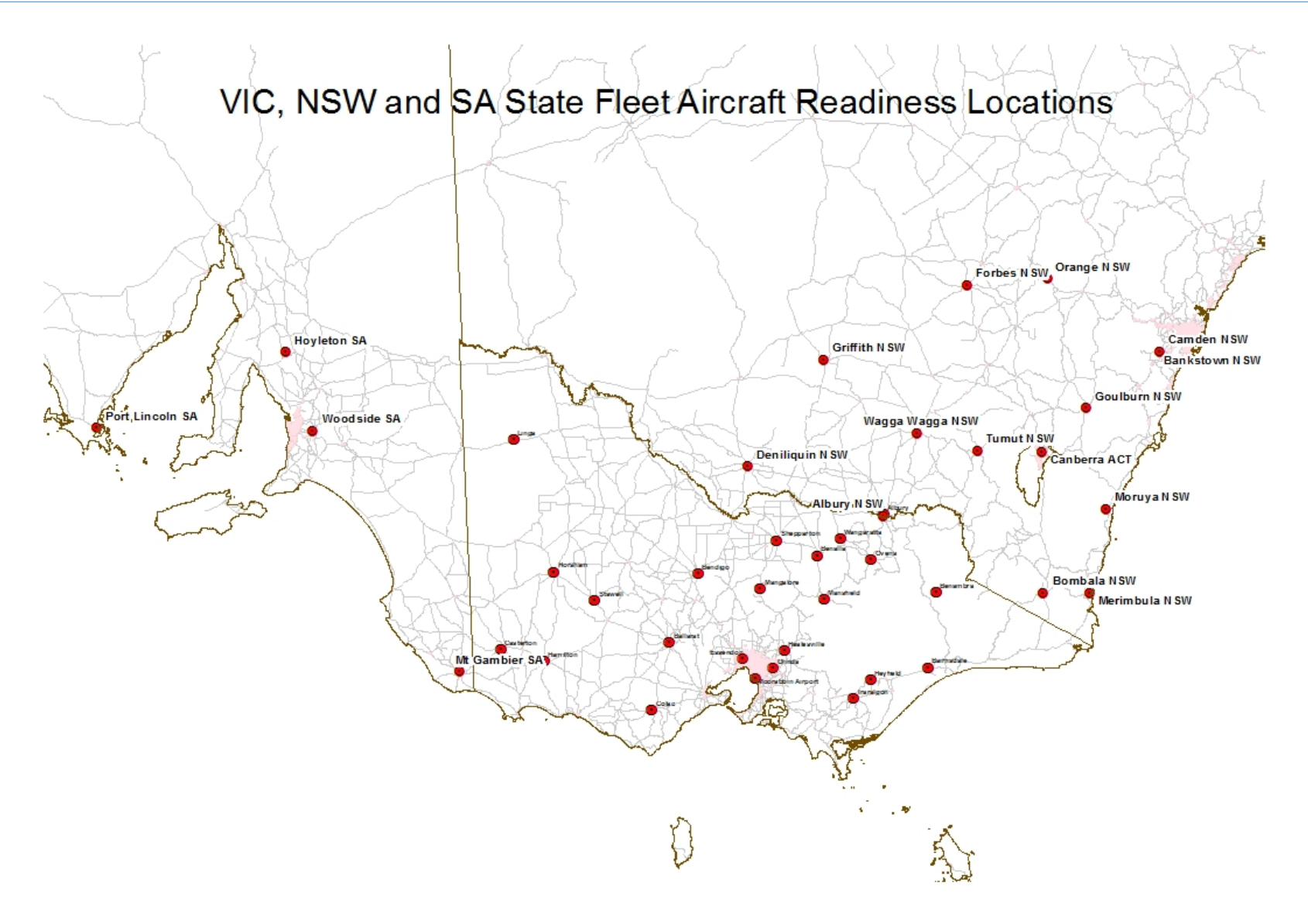
Refer Maps: "**State Fleet Aircraft Readiness Locations**" and "**Vic, NSW and SA Fleet Aircraft Readiness Locations**" below.

State Fleet Aircraft Readiness Locations

Sat 8th – Mon 10th Feb
(Aircraft in place by last light Fri 7th Feb)



Last updated 08:00 on Friday 7th FEB 2014

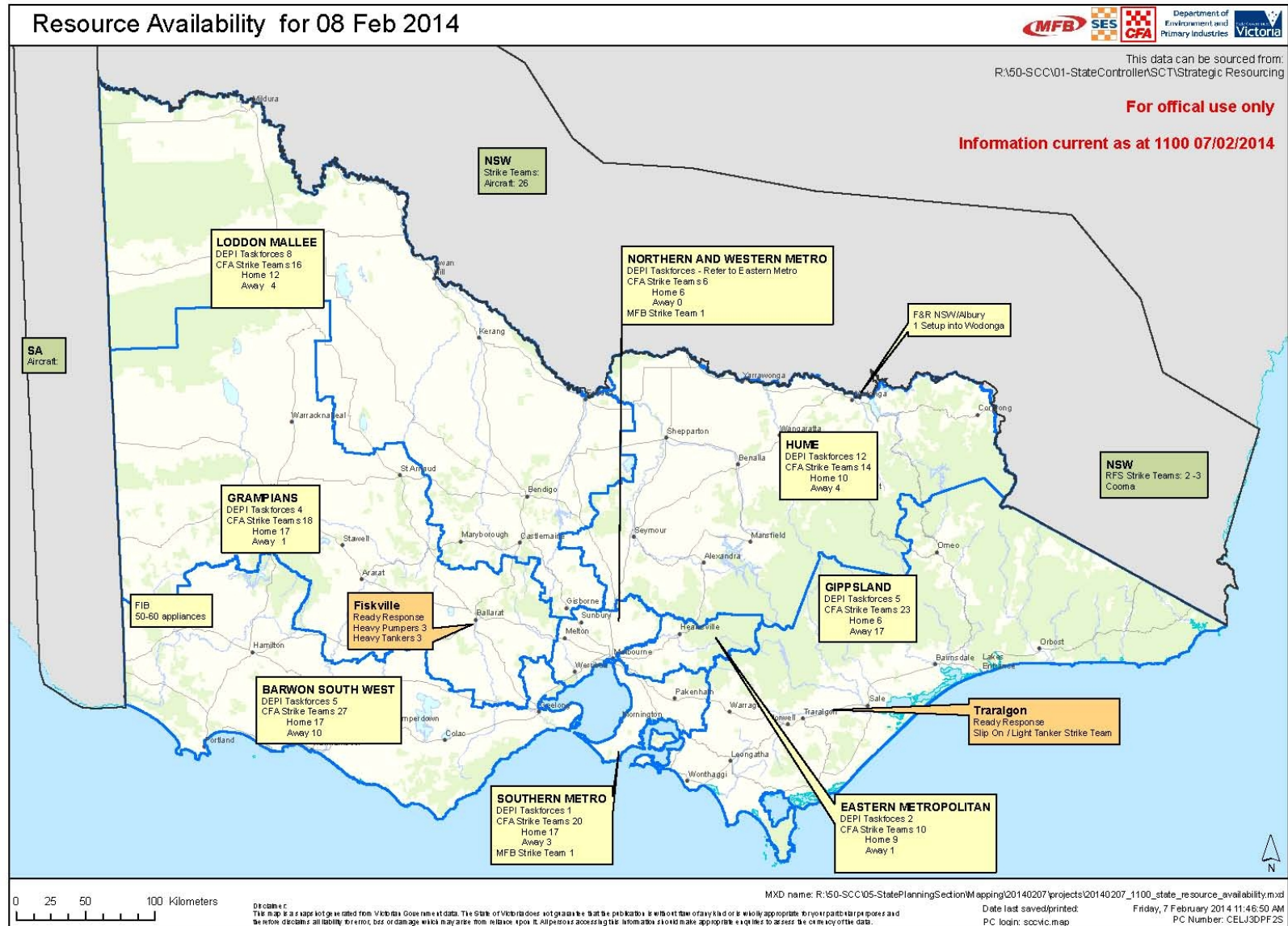


Resource deployment

- All CFA firefighting resources are at maximum level of readiness. DEPI resources are at lower levels of availability due to commitments to existing fires.
- All regions are planning to be self-sufficient for initial attack in relation to ground forces. The Gippsland fires will be managed within existing resource levels until after Sunday.
- Based on an analysis of need, arrangements are in place to pre-position various resources and maintain them in a ready-to-deploy state. This includes cross-agency arrangements for the MFB being able to backfill CFA.
- Liaison with VicPol to support the movement of large numbers of vehicles.
- Forest industry brigades, comprising 50-60 vehicles, will be utilised in southwest Victoria.
- Some NSW resources are ready to backfill or supplement Victorian resources.
- Capacity to deploy and manage base camps at new fires is limited. Two of DEPI's three camps are in use and the third is at Rainbow in the Mallee (the camp can accommodate 400 people and moving it requires about eight semi-trailers).
- Private suppliers such as Toll can provide capacity so long as DEPI provides the high-level management oversight. However, contracts and standby arrangements with such suppliers are not in place for this weekend.
- The state logistics centres of DEPI, CFA and SES are all working sustainably and are appropriately staffed for the weekend.
- Supplies of firefighting retardant and foam are sustainable.

See: 'State Strategic Resource Arrangements for Fire Vehicles and Crews' at end of document.

Refer Resource Availability Map for 08 Feb 2014 below





4. Call-taking, dispatch and information

ESTA

- ESTA has increased the staffing levels to address the needs of all agencies across the period from Friday to Sunday. Based on analysis of past events with similar criteria and anticipated call volumes, staffing number have been increased to meet that projected load.
- ESTA has rostered separate dispatchers have been rostered to manage the St Kilda Festival for Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria.
- To protect ambulance 000 telephone queues, non-emergency ambulance calls have been placed into a separate telephony queue with separate staffing.

Radio communications statewide

- The statewide radio communications system is working well, as it has been over the past few weeks. Interstate people have been provided with radios and are working interoperably within Victoria's command structures.

Victorian Bushfire Information Line

- Staffing of VBIL for the period Friday to Sunday will be at maximum capacity, with further staff on standby.
- VBIL's business continuity site will be active.
- VBIL's manager will be in the SCC to ensure continuity between the two sites.

5. Information provision

- Public information (including warnings and advice) capacity will be operating for warnings and community information at all activated control centres. The warnings and advice function at state level will provide statewide support 24/7.
- As per existing practices the SCC will engage with all available communication channels, of both tradition and social media.
- Key messages for the period have been considered, developed and updated
- A media plan for the period has been developed.

6. Fire causation and compliance

- Fire causation is best dealt with as a prevention method – therefore fire prevention messaging is a key part of the public information strategy.
- On Friday morning CFA declared a Total Fire Ban for Saturday and Sunday. The declaration was timed so that it would reach people well before they became disengaged from the media.



- Numbers of police in country Victoria will be bolstered to help prevent fires (via patrols) and capacity to investigate fire causes, in accordance with statewide Operation Firesetter.
- VicPol has a dedicated 24/7 response capability that can be deployed to any area of the state in support of police investigations.

7. Evacuation and traffic management

- Evacuation and traffic management plans exist for identified high-risk communities and ICCs can activate them at short notice. The plans are necessarily simple so they can be digested quickly and adapted to the particular circumstances that arise.
- All activated incident control centres will include evacuation managers.
- Any evacuation consideration decision will require Incident, Region and State Control discussion.

8. Impact assessment

- As per standard practice, if fires cause loss and damage the impact will be assessed in two phases. The initial impact assessment (by VicPol) provides an initial impression. The secondary impact assessment (by DHS) provides more detail and accuracy and is normally initiated by DHS (and DEPI for agricultural losses) within two days.
- MFB have trained crews to conduct IIAs. For the weekend MFB has two crews on standby to be deployed at short notice.
- Incident management teams will manage access to burnt areas, both for residents and assessment teams. Falling trees may block roads or make areas unsafe.

9. Relief arrangements

- Very recently DHS has completed the 'State Relief Plan: February 2014'. The plan details the State and regional arrangements and current preparedness.
- DHS regional Emergency Managers stated that they (with relevant relief stakeholders) have arrangements in place and are in a state of readiness should a significant event occur.
- DHS state and regional emergency operations centres are operational 24/7 over 8/9 Feb.
- Municipal councils have been alerted and have responsibility for coordinating emergency relief at the local level. Municipal capacity is variable.
- In the event of further fires in Black Saturday areas/communities psychosocial supports would be via the by the relevant local psychosocial support agencies and groups. If a significant event occurs consideration needs to be given to instigating community support activities

"State Relief Plan: February 2014" has been developed.



10. Risk consequence

- The SCC and VicPol have developed a State picture of community events occurring between 7 and 9 February.
- Major events have risk management plans that VicPol and local municipality have assessed. Each plan considers the anticipated attendance and potential evacuation or traffic management issues.
- For public safety reasons some events have been cancelled. That will also reduce competing demands on government resources.

11. Contingency planning and business continuity

- The SCC's contingency site ('SCCR') will be activated to the level of 'warm activation'. From 1000 Saturday to 0600 Monday it will shadow the SCC, with all systems operational. The SCC can relocated to and use that site if needbe, in accordance with the
- On current forecast storm damage is likely and that may complicate fire control and community protection efforts, either directly or indirectly.
- Contingency plans are in place for complicating factors such as bridge and tunnel closures, and dam failure.

See 'SCC business continuity plan' and 'SCC concept of operations'.

12. After a fire

The issues that will require management as the environment becomes dynamic are the following:

- Displaced communities management
- Community information/messaging to impacted communities.
- Access to burnt properties and appropriate PPC for community members to safely enter properties.
- Road access to impacted communities by residents who relocated or were evacuated.

These issues and others will require state control, health command and coordination. Relief and recovery will proactively manage these issue

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: State Strategic Resource Arrangements for Fire Vehicles and Crews (attached)

Appendix 1: [State Relief Plan: February 2014](#) (separate document)

Appendix 1: [Readiness Planning: Fire Behaviour Risk Assessment](#) (separate document)

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State Strategic Resource Arrangements for Fire Vehicles and Crews

Friday 7th February- Tuesday 11th February

Planning Considerations:

- Fire in Landscape as of Thursday 6th February
Gippsland complex, Stoneyford and Mallee
- Potential of new starts, weather forecast potential for lightning ignitions and fire suppression threshold.
- Local ground based suppression capacity with a focus on aggressive initial attack, suppressing fires in grassland to minimise fire spread into forested areas.
- Fire behaviour risk assessment (population/property versus interface)- *as referenced by document prepared by SCC FBAN- Readiness- Fire Behaviour Assessment for 8-02-2014*
- Fatigue levels across State.
- Flexibility in utilisation and deployment of resources.
- Gippsland manages fires with current resources until Sunday 9 February 2014

Arrangements / Principles:

Resources

- Regions, Districts to have full appreciation of resources committed versus resources available (home and away)
- State having visibility of resources committed versus resources available (home and away) and match resource type to task
- Local resources matched to fire in landscape requirements, CFA Districts and Regions to be at maximum readiness, DEPI due to Gippsland Commitment are at reduced levels.
- Forest Industry Brigades (50 – 60 Fire fighting appliances) in SW Victoria to be utilised in South West and SA border resourcing and response arrangement as per local plans

Ready response

- CFA strike team to be stationed at Fiskville from Saturday 8 February 2014 for reactive deployment and then to be moved if required to Gippsland for Sunday 9 February 2014.
- Slip on/Light Tanker Strike Team to be deployed to Gippsland for first attack and surge capacity.
- MFB providing 3 strike teams, 1 strike team utilised for step ups into District 8 to release surge capacity resources. 2 remaining Heavy Pumper Tanker strike teams to be placed in the North and South of Metro area for reactive deployment (primarily asset protection).
- Movement of South West/Wimmera fire vehicles to Central Victoria after the change has come through on Sunday morning (subject to new starts and fire activity) in South West and



Wimmera. Potential strategic staging location to be considered as part of regional planning to facilitate this movement of resources.

- Liaison with Vic-Pol at every level to support the movement of large numbers of resources by road is required.

Interstate Support

- Interstate (NSW F&R) Urban Pumper appliance plan (Greater Melbourne Area) - 48 hours lead time required, 10 Heavy Pumpers with staff. NSW pumper not to be pre-positioned, however this is a State Control Team consideration for Sunday 9 February 2014, subject to fire in landscape and response requirements. This also requires, 1 officer and 1 fire fighter to be provided with each truck by host agency (Victorian).
- Interstate resources- cross border considerations. Fire & Rescue NSW to provide step up into Wodonga Fire Station to release CFA resources. NSW RFS on request to provide 2-3 heavy tanker strike teams from Cooma to East Gippsland.

Longer Term Planning Considerations (3-7days)

- Activation of Interstate (NSW) Urban Pumper appliance plan-subject to fire in landscape and fatigue impacts.
- NSW RFS and other interstate major support requirements to be considered on Sunday 9 February 2014. Required to manage fire in landscape, new starts and fatigue impacts.
- Use of CFA to support DEPI first Attack capability in regions where there is reduced DEPI capacity.
- Additional multi-disciplinary taskforce requirements for access/egress of impacted and/or isolated communities or emergency service resources.
- Specialist resources to support fire/relief operations- i.e medical, rescues etc.