

BLACK SATURDAY 2009



PARTNERS

Networked Emergency Organisation partners include:

- > Department of Sustainability and Environment
- > Parks Victoria
- > Department of Primary Industries
- > VicForests
- > Melbourne Water
- > Department of Planning and Community Development

The Country Fire Authority is responsible for managing fire on private land in rural areas.

The Bush, the Land, Community and living with Fire

DSE and Parks Victoria manage 7.5ha of forest and park

- > All bush
- All fire dependent
- Its land mgt
- Community mgt



RESOURCES

Firefighters

- > More than 3,400 DSE and NEO firefighters
- > Up to 25,000 'active' volunteer firefighters and support staff from the CFA

Aircraft

- > 35 tactical aircraft, including 3 contracted (Elvis) aircranes

Equipment

- > Over 200 dozers, skidders and excavators

PROJECT FIREFIGHTERS

In 2008-09 nearly 700 PFFs were employed short term and based across the state for:

- > Bushfire suppression
- > Planned burning
- > Track clearing
- > Road maintenance
- > Fire recovery activities



FIRE MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, fire is managed under the AIMS Incident management structure, which is based on three key principles:

- > Flexible
- > Responsibility being vested with the Incident Controller
- > Control is delegated – centre, region, incident
- > Incidents are categorised as level 1, 2 or 3

STATE CONTROL CENTRE (SCC)



STATE CONTROL CENTRE (SCC)

Role of the SCC:

- > For fire and flood (and other natural management type emergencies)*
- > Command, Control, and Coordination at a statewide level*
- > Jointly operated by DSE and CFA*
- > Liaison for and supported by other agencies and departments present.*

2008-09 FIRE SEASON

Environmental context

- > 12 years of below average rainfall
- > Ongoing drought
- > Abnormal high forest fuel loads

Pre-Black Saturday

- > DSE had busiest 30 day period on record
- > Only one going fires leading into Black Saturday
- > Heatwave – 4 days over 40° C

WEATHER CONDITIONS ON FEB 7

Temperature

- > Mid to high 40s across Victoria
- > Above 46° C in Melbourne (hottest day on record)

Wind Speed

- > Up to 115 km/h
- > Very low humidity

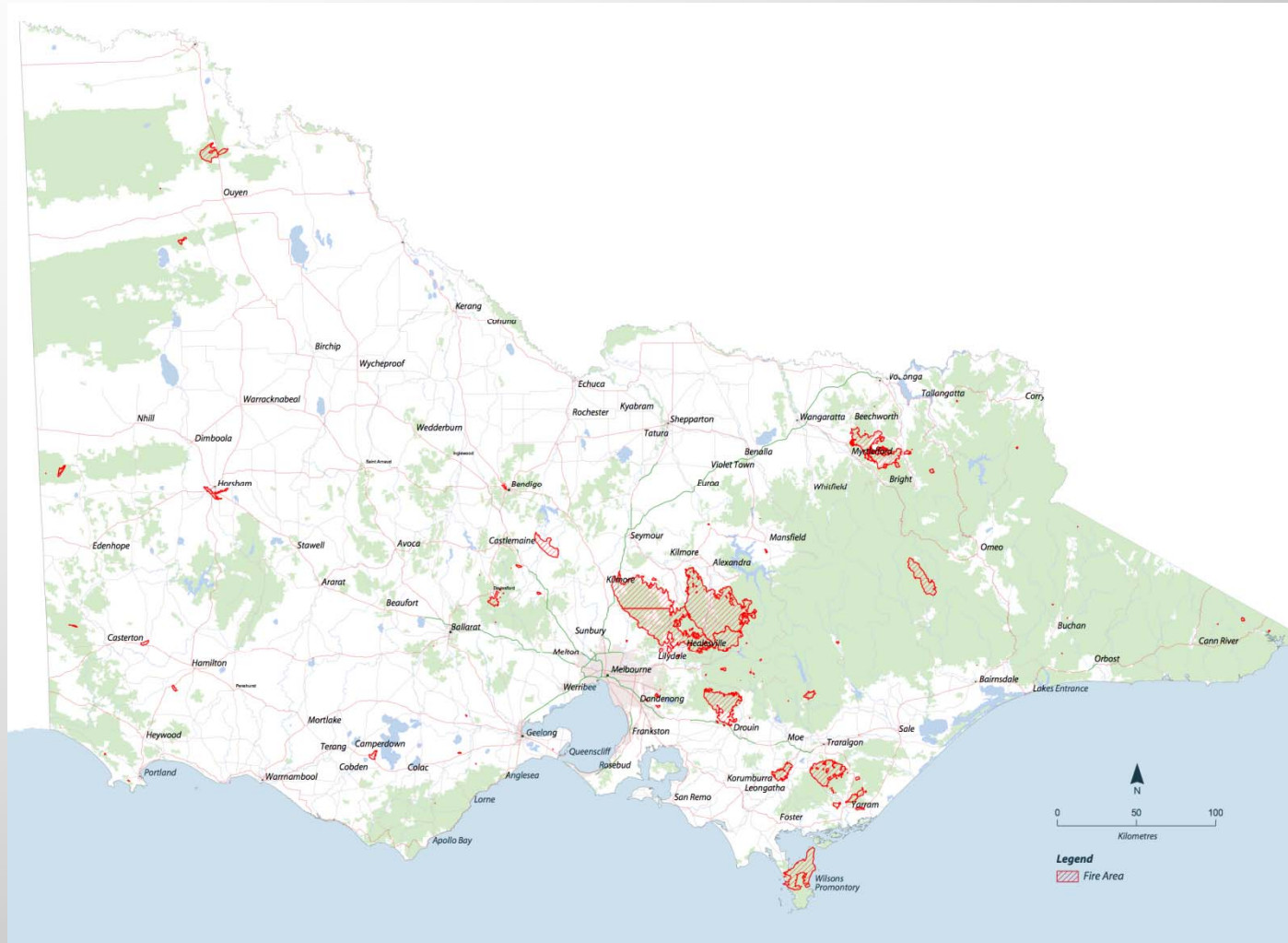
Forest Fire Danger Index

- > Between 120-190 – up to nearly 300



Statewide Fire Areas for 2008/2009 Season

Department of
Sustainability and
Environment



FIRE AREA

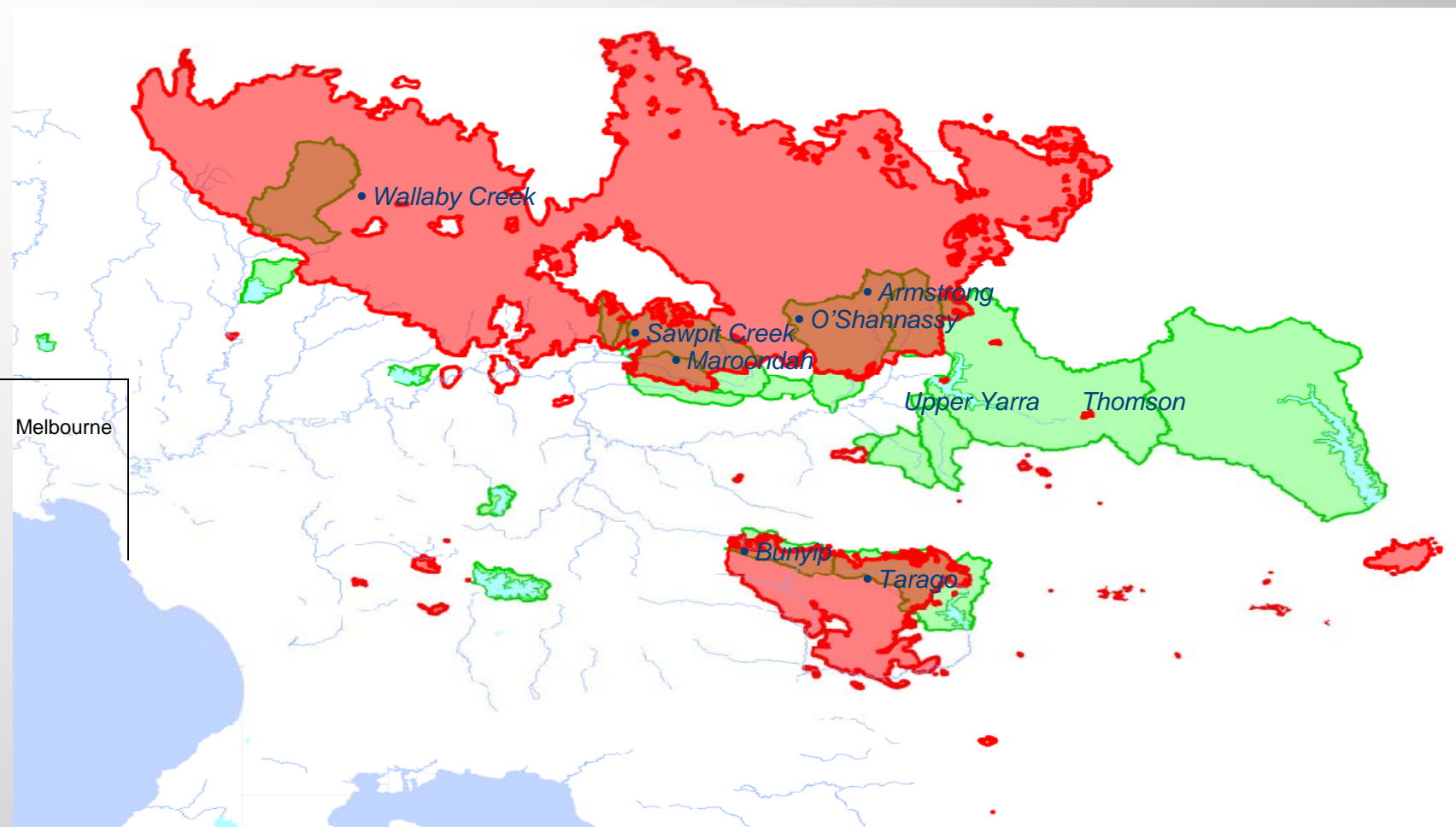
- > 445,900 (approx.) hectares burnt in the Black Saturday fires
- > More than 2,600km of control lines were built by fire crews during the February fires

FIRE FIGHTING CHALLENGES

- > Hot, dusty and very hazardous environment
- > Forest firefighting in some of the most rugged and heavily forested parts of Victoria
- > Racing against time to get areas burnt out and blacked-out before the next period of bad fire weather

Melbourne Water's Water Supply Catchments and Fire Area as of March 03, 2009

Department of
Sustainability and
Environment



PROTECTION OF CATCHMENTS

- > More than 820 kilometres of streams, rivers and creeks in two Melbourne Water regions affected
- > Took 6 weeks to control after Black Saturday
- > Fire managed from several multi-agency IMTs.
Strategy utilised strategic fuel break and backburned to protect Upper Yarra catchment

IMPACT - BIODIVERSITY

- > Mountain Ash and Alpine Ash forest stands severely impacted
- > Affected species
 - > Leadbeater's Possum
 - > Brush-tailed Phascogale
 - > Greater & Yellow-bellied Gliders
 - > Helmeted Honeyeater
 - > Barred Galaxias fish
 - > Shiny Nematolepis



RECOVERY - REHABILITATION

- > Rehabilitation of control lines
- > Extensive use of BAER Team approach
- > Salvage timber from fire affected state forest areas



AFTERMATH

Key findings from Royal Commission to date:

- > Warnings - too slow
- > Lack of central control
- > Intelligence and information flow stopped
- > Systems overwhelmed
 - Websites collapsed
 - Information flow – too scattered
 - 000 despatch compounded the problem
- > Underprepared in critical risk areas

Agencies and leaders called to account.

AFTERMATH

Community Reaction – heros, then doubt, now stabilising

AFTERMATH – ACTIONS TO DATE

Revised Command and Control

- > *Single identified person in control – incident, region, central*
- > *Rebuilding support systems – field to the centre*

Fire Danger Rating – 6 divisions from ‘catastrophic’ down

Easy to understand warnings and messages

More funding to build capability

Continue to adapt

THANK YOU

A 'Thank You' to all from North America that helped us in our time of need – it will not be forgotten.