

18th August 2009

Eight Towns and Communities from Region on List

As part of the State Government response to the Interim Report of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, eight towns and communities from the Ballarat region have been identified as particularly vulnerable in the event of fire.

The communities which include Mt Helen and Mt Clear in Ballarat have been identified by agencies to be the most vulnerable because of geographical, environmental and community factors. They include towns and suburbs in or near bushland and summer tourist areas.

Local State MP, Geoff Howard said that the Government had accepted advice from fire agencies for the need for individual township protection plans for 52 towns and communities across the state which would require planning over and above standard municipal fire prevention plans.

“For these communities Town Protection Plans would need to be developed.”

“As well as the Mt Helen, Mt Clear community the towns of Creswick, Daylesford, Dereel, Greendale, Hepburn Springs, Steiglitz and Trentham; have been listed.”

A Town Protection Plan provides a planned response by both emergency services and the community to a bushfire within or within close proximity to a township which has the potential to impact on a local community.

They are plans for the local community that address the specific needs of the individual town or community’s people, property, environment, vulnerable town facilities including schools, kindergartens and nursing homes and assets, heritage areas, critical infrastructure, access and exit routes and potential places of relative safety or assembly and hazards.

“Historically Township Protection Plans have been used by local brigades for operational response, but as part of this new approach they have now been enhanced to include community and municipality engagement, and education,” Mr Howard said.

“On the expert advice of the fire agencies, the Government has provided \$1.9 million to the CFA to put Township Protection Plans in place, working closely with local councils and communities in those areas,” Mr Howard advised.

“Resources have been increased to undertake these plans which are a new way of ensuring that lives are protected above all else in an emergency, because it is vital that every Victorian is fire ready no matter where they live or what their fire experience has been.”

Mr Howard said that the CFA will lead the development of the Town Protection Plans and will work with local councils and engage local communities to explore local knowledge, history, culture and people’s needs in the development of the plans.

“It will be important for all residents with special local knowledge and skills to be involved in the development of these plans,” he said.