

## Community Information Newsletter

### Cobden-Camperdown Peat Fires Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018

#### **Important Information**

##### **Situation Update**

Since 9am yesterday 26mls of rain has fallen where the fire activity has occurred. This has resulted in slippery conditions making it hazardous for fire fighting. Mild temperatures are forecast over the next 3 days, with westerly winds forecast initially up to 30 km/h but decreasing to light winds over the coming days.

Fire operations are centred on two peat fires: Cobrico and Elingamite. Provision of water for fire suppression activities has been a collaborative effort, with water sourced from Fonterra settling ponds, a temporary feed from the North Otway Pipeline and the NSW Hytrans unit continuing to assist in conjunction with contracted irrigation companies.

It is anticipated that drones will be utilised to monitor conditions in areas where there has been fire activity. The public is requested to be aware of the drones and are requested to stay clear of the area of operation with their personal drones.

The Incident Control Centre is working towards ensuring that cultural heritage sites are protected and that the surrounding agricultural community can continue or recommence commercial enterprise as soon as possible.

##### **Hazards – Trees and power lines**

The recent spate of strong winds may have impacted trees to a greater extent than in previous days. Take particular care and diligence around all trees whilst travelling in the area. Watch for hanging limbs being dislodged, partially burnt trees falling and branches breaking.

In the event of power lines being brought down by falling limbs/trees, stay away from the fallen power lines. If power is disrupted ensure you have a charged mobile phone, emergency contact numbers and a torch. Consider food safety and the storage of food during power outages. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety/food-safety-information-for-consumers/food-safety-during-power-outages>

##### **Water tanks and water quality**

Your water source may have become contaminated from debris and ash during the fires. With the rain that has fallen in the area over Saturday and forecast in the coming days there is potential for contamination of your stored water. To prevent contamination, ensure your roof is thoroughly cleaned and first flush diverters are working properly. If you do not have a first flush diverter disconnect the downpipes until your roof has been properly cleaned.

If your water looks, smells or tastes unusual, then there is a good chance that it has become contaminated. Do not use the water for drinking, food preparation or for consumption by animals. You can still use contaminated water on your garden. If you have any concerns about the quality of your water, contact Wannon Water on 1300 926 666.

If you need assistance with the flushing, cleaning or refilling of your tanks please contact your local council (contact details on last page).

##### **Assistance for small business**

If you are affected by the bushfires, the Australian Taxation Office can help with your lodgement program and reconstructing records. For more information visit <https://www.ato.gov.au/tax-professionals/your-practice/tax-and-bas-agents/natural-disasters/> or call 1800 806 218 to discuss your circumstances and how we can assist you.

##### **Community updates and recovery Information**

People can contact their local council for important recovery information:

- Corangamite Shire
  - A community information point will be open from Monday at the Keilambete road located within the Corangamite Shire, Civic Centre, at 181 Manifold Street, Camperdown, or phone the Corangamite Shire on (03) 5593 7100 or email [shire@corangamite.vic.gov.au](mailto:shire@corangamite.vic.gov.au)
- Moyne Shire
  - For any Moyne Shire Council assistance or fire recovery information contact: 1300 656 564 or email [Moyne@moyne.vic.gov.au](mailto:Moyne@moyne.vic.gov.au)

- South Grampians Shire
  - For any South Grampians Shire assistance or fire recovery information contact: (03) 5573 0444 or email [council@sthgrampians.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@sthgrampians.vic.gov.au)

Community information in relation to the peat fires will be displayed in shopfronts of local businesses in the townships of Terang, Cobden and Camperdown and on the front windows of the Cobden Civic Hall and Terang Civic Hall and online at

[https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#community\\_information\\_newsletters](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#community_information_newsletters)

For any **Police** matters including relocation forms, please contact your local Police Station at: Cobden, Camperdown or Terang. For emergencies ring 000.

### Community Health Assessment Centre

As air quality has improved, including very low Carbon Monoxide (CO) levels, the **free** community health assessment centres have moved to your local health services.

If you are still concerned about your health, or wish to get your CO levels checked, you can visit:

- Cobden Health, 5 Victoria Street Cobden
- Terang Hospital, 13 Austin Avenue Terang
- Camperdown Hospital, Robinson Street Camperdown

\*A referral from your GP is not necessary

### Help is available

It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions following a distressing event such as the recent fire events. There are many things you can do to cope and recover from traumatic events, and there are free, local support services available to help guide you through this time.

For access to local emotional support services please call Warrnambool Community Health on **(03) 5563 4000** or Colac Area Health on **(03) 5232 5180**. They are offering free, confidential and professional support to individuals or families who have been impacted by the recent fires regardless of where you are located. No General Practitioner referrals are required. Website: <http://www.southwesthealthcare.com.au>

More helpful information is also available here: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/trauma-reaction-and-recovery>

### Warnings and Advice messages

There are currently two (2) community notifications in place for air quality in the areas of Cobrico, Elingamite, and Elingamite North, please observe this advice.

### Financial assistance

Financial assistance is still available to eligible fire-affected community members. Please call your local council or call VicEmergency on 1800 226 226 for more information.

## Questions & Answers

### CO levels for the community have been declared no longer dangerous, but I know a few people who have tested with CO in their system. Why are you saying it's not an issue?

Carbon monoxide (CO) can build up gradually in the human body over a period of hours. It also gradually dissipates from the body after the exposure stops.

CO concentrations have been low around the fires and in Cobden for many days.

### Is particulate matter now considered no longer dangerous?

PM2.5 in Cobden is considered low, but occasionally you may smell smoke for small durations. Please take any smoke-related health advice issued by emergency services.

### I live within the 1 km exposure zone and have relocated my family. Is it safe for me and my children to return home?

Careful monitoring of the conditions in the area has determined that it is now safe for you to return to your home. However, it is still important for everyone to minimise exposure to smoky conditions. This is particularly the case if you or anyone you care for has a chronic health condition, such as a heart or lung condition including asthma.

Spend time indoors when there is smoke, wherever possible. If you feel unwell, visit the Community Health Assessment Centre or call NURSE-ON-CALL. In an emergency, dial 000.

Visit VicEmergency or the EPA's AirWatch website for the most up-to-date information on air quality in the area.

### **Carbon Monoxide monitors**

With EPA confirming air quality levels have improved and are very unlikely to impact people's health, Carbon Monoxide Monitors can be returned to the Warrnambool CFA office, corner Raglan Parade and Walsh Road, Warrnambool. Community members may also hold onto them if they wish, and can return them at a later date to the Warrnambool CFA office.

### **Schools return**

All schools will be reopen as usual at the commencement of Term 2 from Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April. The Victorian Education Department will ensure that health and wellbeing support will be offered to students and staff.

**Helping Children Cope:** For advice on how to help kids cope, call: Parent Line Tel. **13 22 89** or the Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800**

This information is also helpful for parents  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/truma-and-primary-school-age-children>

**For health advice and support you can call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24, visit your GP for medical advice, visit your local health service or dial 000 (Triple Zero) in an emergency.**

### **Aged care return**

With air quality levels improving, the advice from EPA and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is that residents from the Cobden Health Aged Care can begin returning from Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April.

Cobden Health Services will be working closely with the individual families of the aged care residents to plan for their safe return.

It is anticipated that their return will be staggered based on the individual health needs and risks for the aged care residents.

### **Useful Services**

**After hours Terang Hospital or NURSE-ON-CALL** on 1300 60 60 24 or seek medical advice. Call 000 in an emergency.

**For Relief and Recovery Information visit**  
<https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief#southern-west-fires-march-2018>

LifeLine: 13 11 14  
MensLine: 1300 789 978  
Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800  
1800 Respect: 1800 737 732

**EPA Air Watch visit**  
[www.epa.vic.gov.au/epaairwatch](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/epaairwatch)

**Hazardous Trees**  
Contact: Corangamite Shire Council 5593 7100

**Blazeaid:**  
[www.blazeaid.com.au](http://www.blazeaid.com.au)

**Agriculture Victoria (affected stock)**  
Contact: 5336 6721

**Wannon Water (to flush, clean and refill your tanks)**  
Contact: 1300 926 666

**Corangamite Shire**  
Contact: 5593 7100  
[www.corangamite.vic.gov.au](http://www.corangamite.vic.gov.au)

**Moyne Shire Council**  
Contact: 1300 656 564  
<http://www.moyne.vic.gov.au>

**Southern Grampian Shire**  
Contact: 5573 0444  
<http://www.sthgrampians.vic.gov.au>

**NURSE-ON-CALL**  
Ph: 1300 60 60 24 or visit your GP for medical advice, or dial Triple Zero in an emergency.