

The Importance of Remembering and Commemorating Disasters

EDUCATIVE AND THERAPEUTIC PERSPECTIVES

**Emergency Management Conference
Melbourne
29 May 2019**

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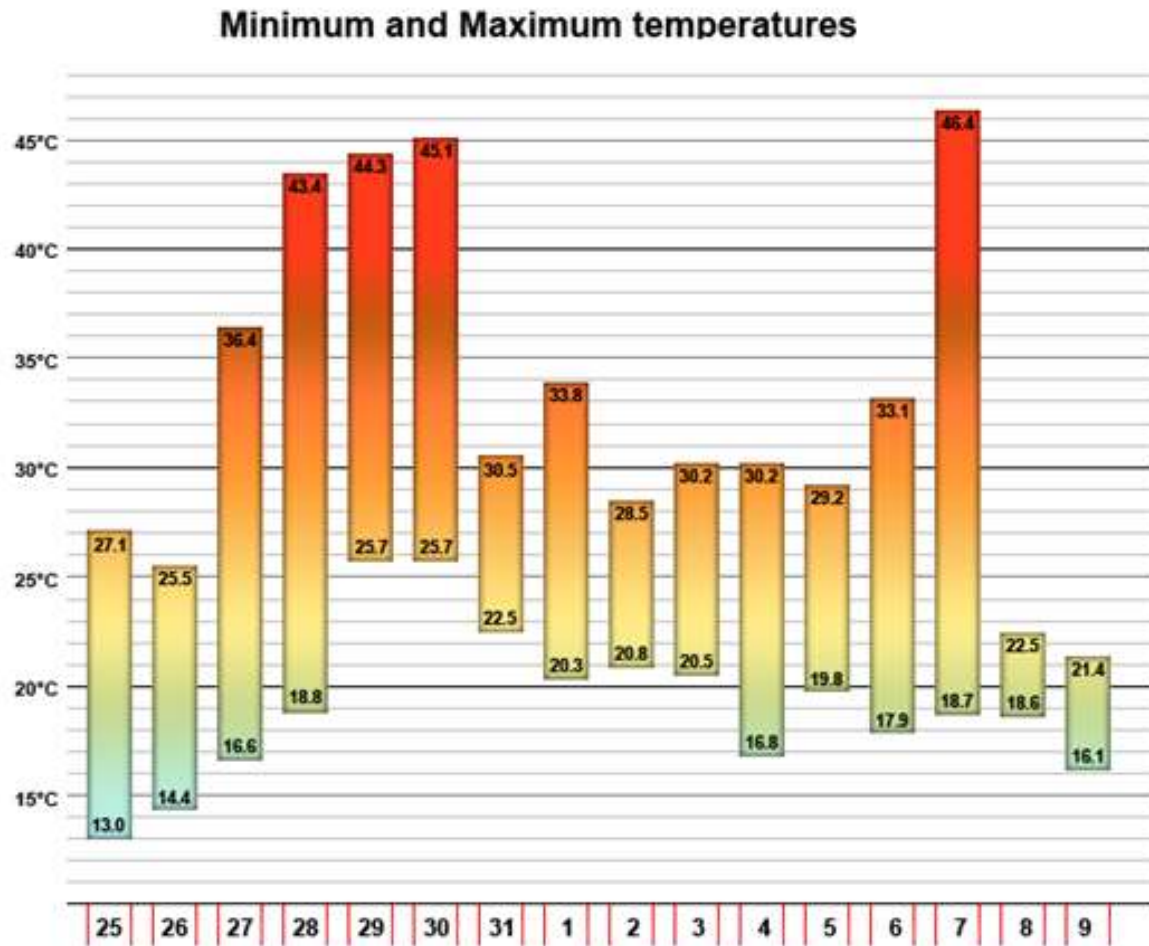
Overview of Presentation

- Remembrance of Black Saturday
- Remembrance in other places
- Educative aspects to remembering
- Therapeutic aspects to remembering
- Remembrance in Victoria and Australia

BLACK SATURDAY, 7 FEB 2009:



Conditions leading up to and on Black Saturday



Melbourne City
January - February 2009

430,000 hectares of land were burned



January-February 2009 bushfires



19,000+ CFA personnel, with private units, forest industry brigades, international and local volunteers, community organisations, businesses and charities assisted communities to respond and recover



Residents & Volunteers both impacted



C.F.A.

Thank you
To all volunteers

from

Warburton Primary
School

More than \$379 million was donated to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund distributed to the communities and businesses affected.



Bushfire Appeal Closes

Sincere thanks to those who gave

In February Australians came together in an unprecedented display of support. We join families and communities affected in thanking you for the generosity you have shown. In difficult financial times, you have been selfless in your giving. You have truly demonstrated the power of humanity.

Your donations are reaching people in need

Your donations are helping families to farewell their loved ones with dignity, they are helping survivors to find shelter and comfort and to begin the process of rebuilding their lives, their homes and communities. This is a huge task that will take some time.

The roles of Red Cross, the Victorian Government and the Independent Panel

The donations you made through Red Cross are now being distributed by the Victorian Government under the oversight of an Independent Advisory Panel made up of community leaders.

Finalise your fundraising efforts

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal, which closed on April 17, has raised over \$300 million. Anyone who has held a fundraising event will need to send the money to Red Cross by June 30. Those planning events after April 17 should contact Red Cross on 1800 811 700 before proceeding.

Accessing assistance

Each and every dollar will help individuals and communities recover. Please visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal/home to find out how your donation is making a difference or call the Department of Human Services in Victoria on 1800 180 213 to find out how you can access assistance.

No Appeal funds have been used in placing this notice

NON VIC



Bushfire Appeal



Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund

- ❑ Created immediately after Black Saturday
- ❑ Vic Govt partnered with Cth and Red Cross to create VBAF to meet the needs of bushfire affected individuals and communities
- ❑ Created as Govt Trust Account, operated by indep Panel = separate decision-making body from Govt
- ❑ Remaining funds distributed to Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal -distributed through their Community Foundations and Trusts (Approx \$4.m remaining)

2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission



VBRC Community Engagement



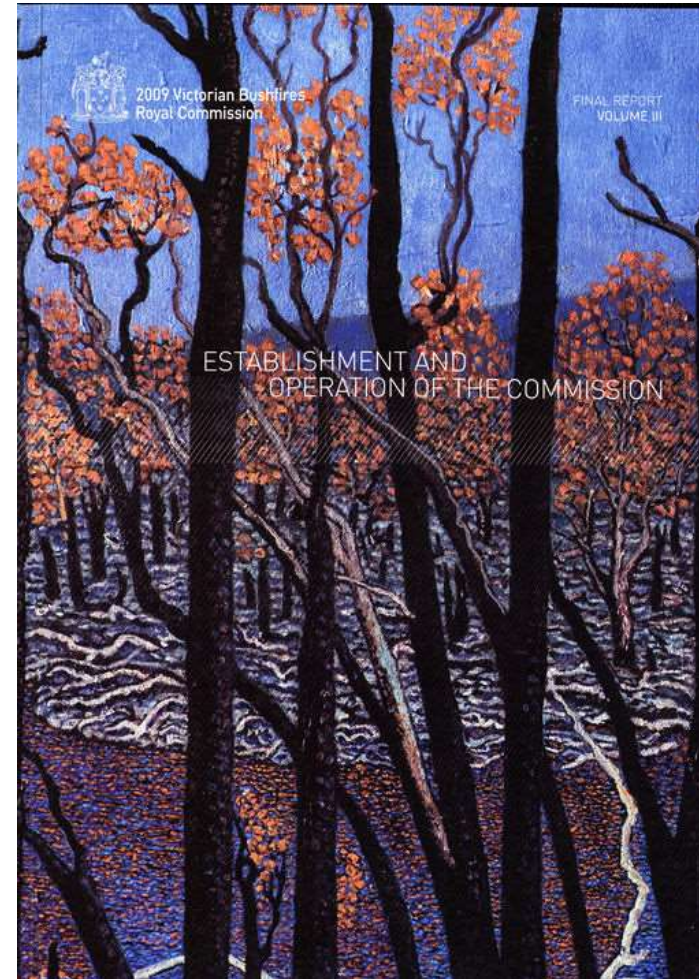
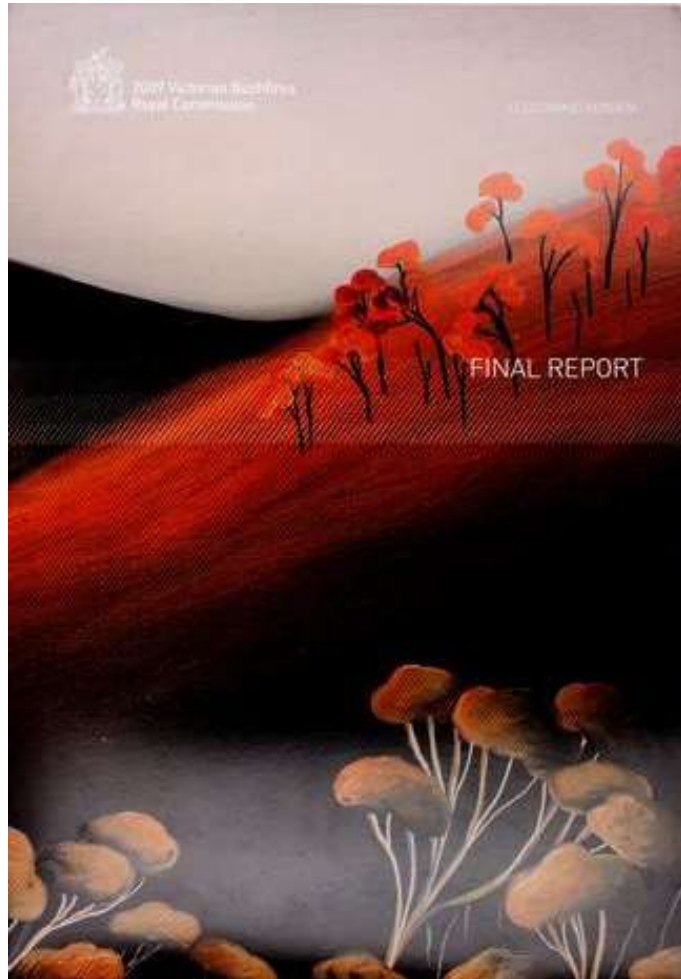
REMEMBERING AND COMMEMORATING:



Museums Victoria Collections



2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report



Community memorials for the 2009 bushfires



More than two tonnes, and 3,500 individually forged leaves, make up the Black Saturday memorial tree, now permanently erected in Strathewen.

Memorials around the world



National September 11 Memorial & Museum: NYC



Memorials around the world – Prague Public Park



Memorials around the world – Budapest Riverbank



ACT Bushfire Memorial



Black Saturday 10th Anniversary Commemoration

- ❑ Bushfires Advisory Group created to advise on commemoration.
- ❑ Members – Hon John Brumby (Chair, former Premier), Ben Hubbard (CEO, Vic Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority), Hon Pat MacNamara (former Deputy Premier, and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) and Susan Pascoe AM (Commissioner, Vic Bushfires RC)
- ❑ Hon Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria - Patron for the 10 Year Anniversary Commemorations.

Black Saturday 10th Anniversary Commemoration

- Commemoration in local fire impacted communities on 7 February
- Vic and Cth Govt funding (\$2.5m) supported the development of 59 memorials across 18 LGAs over past 3 years
- Vic Govt still provides (reduced) psychosocial and therapeutic services to those impacted by the fires. Provision increased during commemoration
- Grants program (approx \$5k) for local communities to support their commemorations in 2019

Black Saturday 10th Anniversary Commemoration

- Commemoration in local fire impacted communities on 9 February
- Statewide commemorative event on 4 February in late afternoon in Exhibition Buildings – attended by PM, Opposition Leader, Governor, representatives of armed services, volunteer services, impacted
- Opening of Museums Victoria Bushfires Exhibition followed the Memorial Service

Bushfire Museum and Education Centre

- In February 2019, the Victorian Government announced it would create a bushfire museum. Victorians will be able to provide input into the project through a community consultation process. This input will help inform future planning and design work. Creative Victoria will lead the project in consultation with the Office for the Victorian Government Architect.

EDUCATIVE AND THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF COMMEMORATION



Remembering as education

- *"Men who had lived their lives in the bush went their ways in the shadow of dread expectancy. Though they felt the imminence of danger they could not tell that it was to be far greater than they could imagine. They had not lived long enough. The experience of the past could not guide them to an understanding of what might, and did happen."*

— Justice Leonard Stretton, 1939
Bushfires RC



Educative role for schools and homes

☐ **Schools**

- ☐ Particular role for schools in bushfire prone areas, incl evacuation protocols
- ☐ Education on preventative measures

☐ **Homes**

- ☐ Understanding of local environment
- ☐ Understanding of danger periods
- ☐ Receptiveness to warnings
- ☐ Bushfire plans

Therapeutic Measures

- Anecdotal evidence local memorials therapeutic
- Anecdotal evidence of positive community building effect of bushfire impacted communities
- Evidence of some individuals still traumatised a decade on and needing professional support
- Some comfort on remembrance as antidote to Justice Stretton's observation, '*They had not lived long enough*' ie learning the lessons from the past.

Reflection

- Recent wildfires in Portugal, Canada and California remind us on the ongoing threat of bushfire
- The impacts of climate change mean these events are likely to increase in frequency and severity
- Commemoration, remembering, education and attending to the therapeutic impacts of fire can help us prepare for the future
- Victoria and Australia are blessed with the selfless contribution of the women and men in emergency services who put their lives on the line (and often their personal properties at risk) to respond to bushfires.

Thank you

