

## Community Information Newsletter

# Cobden-Camperdown Peat Fires

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2018

### **Important Information – Change in Conditions**

Weather conditions over the coming days are being monitored closely, but have already increased the smoke impacts in nearby communities.

**Forecasts show conditions on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> April, are expected to deteriorate further, with reconsiderations to temporarily relocate or postpone public events at Cobden.**

**The Incident Controller, Environment Protection Authority and Department of Health and Human Services are strongly encouraging community members to stay away from areas affected by the smoke on Saturday.**

If leaving the area, you should attend the Terang Relief Centre to complete an absence of residence form, which should be handed to police anytime between 9am to 5pm at the relief centre.

### **Warnings and Advice messages**

Two Warnings have been issued for poor air quality in the areas of Cobrico, Elingamite, and Elingamite North.

Two Advice Messages have been issued for poor air quality in Camperdown, Cobden, Cobrico, Elingamite and Elingamite North

Up-to-date messages can be found at:

[www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)

**Listen to Local ABC radio and check the VicEmergency App. VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 for general information.**

**For Relief and Recovery visit:**

[https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief#southwest\\_fires\\_march\\_2018](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief#southwest_fires_march_2018)

### **Health & Safety**

Smoke from peat fires can affect people's health. People with heart or lung conditions (including asthma), children, pregnant women and those over 65 years of age are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke from fires. People with existing heart or lung conditions (including asthma) should follow the treatment plan advised their doctor.

If you or anyone in your care is experiencing symptoms that may be due to smoke exposure, you can visit the Community Health Assessment Centre based out of the Terang Relief Centre (Terang Civic Hall, 129 Mary Bradshaw Avenue), call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 or seek medical advice. Call 000 in an emergency.

If you are within 1km – 6km of the peat smoke plume it is recommended you avoid outdoor physical activity, anyone with a heart or lung condition should take their medication as prescribed.

Air quality is continually being monitored for the areas of Cobrico, Elingamite and Elingamite North. Up-to-date air quality information can be found at EPA Air Watch:

[www.epa.vic.gov.au/epairwatch](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/epairwatch)



### **Not all Face Masks are the Same**

Ordinary paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas can help but do not protect you from fine smoke particles or carbon monoxide.

Masks are available at the Health Assessment Centre at Terang Civic Hall. P2 masks don't provide complete protection. They do not remove or protect against carbon monoxide.

P2 masks are to be used for a maximum of 4 hours or until they become damp. Fitted properly, a P2 mask can filter out some of the fine particles from smoke. Particulate matter is being monitored by EPA at their incident air monitoring stations. PM2.5 particles are smaller than 2.5 micrometres and they are up to 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair.

### **Livestock & Pets**

The health and safety of animals is also important. While most livestock are resilient to peat fire impacts; dogs, cats and horses are more sensitive. Watch out for eye irritation and respiratory problems, if concerned please contact your local vet, you also may wish to consider relocating animals.



### **Information Point**

Come and say Hi to Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria (AV) and Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) members at the big red bus set up out front of the Uniting Church, 61 Curdie Street, Cobden.



### **Peat Fire Update**

Firefighters are continuing to work hard to extinguish the peat fires with a focus on Cobrico, Lake Elingamite and Lake Bullen-Merri.

Specialist firefighting vehicles are being utilised at this fire. Compressed Air Foam System (CAFs) equipment from the Latrobe Valley and Tasmania and 2 Airport Tenders are currently being used. These vehicles have the capacity to pump larger quantities of water from a further distance.

Community members around the peat fires near Cobrico, Lake Bullen Merri and Lake Elingamite should continue to stay informed about the risks of peat fire smoke and what it means for them.

#### **Lake Cobrico**

Emergency services are currently working on ceasing fire growth and reducing smoke in the area whilst working on engineering solutions for extinguishment. A hose lay in being relocated to Bullen Merri to Lake Cobrico today.

#### **Lake Elingamite**

Emergency services are currently working on halting the spread of the fire, minimising smoke.

#### **Lake Bullen Merri**

Lake Bullen Merri fire is currently suppressed with ground crews continuing to monitor the situation.

## PERSONAL WELFARE

It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions after an emergency – these feelings are part of the healing process.

Do you know someone who may be struggling or showing signs of distress following the bushfires in Victoria's south west? Signs can include them reliving the traumatic event, feeling angry, afraid, or even numb. Please don't ignore the warning signs. The sooner they receive treatment, the better the outcome is likely to be. Encourage the person to see a doctor for or make your own appointment with a doctor to discuss your concerns and find out what help is available.

For local Community Health Services - South West Healthcare provides specialist mental health services to South Western Victoria:

**Phone:** 5561 9100 / **Website:** [southwesthealthcare](http://southwesthealthcare)

Visit [www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief) for information on coping with trauma in recovery.

### Current Locations of EPA Monitoring Stations

