

## Community Information Newsletter

### Cobden-Camperdown Peat Fires

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018

#### Important Information

##### **Some good news shared at the Community Meeting in Terang last night.**

After careful monitoring of air quality data and evidence over the past 19 days schools and most of the residents of the aged care facility are able to return to the Cobden area.

Chief Health Officer and Chief Environmental Scientist support the Emergency Management Commissioner and Incident Controller in the decision.

Residents in the one kilometre zone of the Cobrico peat fire are no longer advised to relocate at night time. It is important residents remain connected to information and warnings and take steps to manage their personal health and wellbeing.

Fire suppression has been successful in minimising the smoke emitting from the peat fire. A four-kilometre above-ground pipeline is now in place to assist fire-fighters in extinguishing the Cobrico peat fire by boosting the amount of water available at the site and allowing fire-fighters to flood the area from underground.

The temporary access of water will not have any effect on the township of Terang. This is because the North Otway pipeline has more water available than what is required.



**Stay informed via [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)**  
Listening to Local ABC radio or phoning the Vic Emergency Hotline 1800 226 226 or visiting the Terang Relief Centre.

#### Warnings and Advice messages

Currently 2 Advice messages are in place for air quality in the areas of Cobden, Cobrico, Elingamite, and Elingamite North, please observe this advice. Currently 1 Community Notification is in place for the peat fire near Camperdown / Lake Bullen Merri.



#### 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.

**A free community health assessment centre has been established at the Terang Relief Centre, 129 High Street, Terang and is open between 8am and 8pm, until further notice.**

People can also contact their local community health service for health or emotional support services on 5563 4000 or 5232 5180.

Or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 or visit your GP for medical advice, or dial Triple Zero in an emergency.



The use of drone footage has played a pivotal part in providing much needed intelligence from above. Credited operators perform this under guidance from Civil Aviation Safety Regulations

<https://www.casa.gov.au/aircraft/landing-page/flying-drones-australia>

## 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 builds up gradually in the human body over a period of hours. It is also gradually removed from the body after exposure stops.

Carbon monoxide 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.

### **Schools return**

Principals in the area will be contacting their school communities over the next couple of days to inform them that schools will be open next week. The Department will ensure that health and wellbeing support will be offered to staff and students.

### **Aged care return**

With air quality levels improving, the advice from EPA and DHHS is that residents from the Cobden Health Aged Care can begin returning from early next week.

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 aged care residents.

### **Financial assistance**

Emergency re-establishment payments are still available to eligible fire-affected community members.

These payments provide financial assistance to help alleviate personal hardship suffered as a result of the fires.

The Department of Health and Human Services continues to be at the Terang relief centre, to help community members access the assistance.

### **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 Terang Community Health Assessment Centre at Terang Civic Hall, 129 High Street, Terang. Community members may also hold onto them if they wish, and return them at a later date.

**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 have 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.

---

## **Useful Services**

**Personal Welfare** It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions after an emergency. These feelings are part of the healing process. South West Healthcare provides specialist mental health services please call:

**Phone:** 5563 4000 or 5232 5180

**Website:** [southwesthealthcare](http://southwesthealthcare)

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

**EPA Air Watch visit**

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

**For Relief and Recovery Information visit**  
[https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief#southwest\\_fires\\_march\\_2018](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief#southwest_fires_march_2018)

LifeLine: 13 11 14

MensLine: 1300 789 978

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

**Hazardous Trees**

Contact: 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)