



Warrnambool policemen Leading Senior Constable Mal Agnew (left) and Senior Sergeant Shane Keogh and city municipal fire prevention officer Peter McArdle help raise the awareness of the anti-bushfire arson roadshow with Crime Stoppers CEO Samantha Hunter in the city yesterday. 130111DW04 Picture: DAMIAN WHITE

# Show hits road

## City hosts arson awareness program

WARRNAMBOOL  
By MATTHEW O'TOOLE

A PLEA for the public to be vigilant this summer has been delivered to Warrnambool after the Crime Stoppers anti-bushfire arson roadshow visited yesterday.

Representatives from Victoria Police and Warrnambool City Council met with the CEO of Crime Stoppers Victoria yesterday for the roadshow that sought to encourage the public to report any suspicious activity.

The roadshow is visiting major regional towns to raise awareness during a summer

where the state has been plagued by bushfires.

"We're asking the community to be the eyes and ears of Crime Stoppers over summer. We know that between 30 to 50 per cent of all bushfires are deliberately or recklessly lit," Crime Stoppers CEO Samantha Hunter said.

"We know that when there is an arsonist in a community that is on the lookout, they are less likely to offend," Ms Hunter said.

"If you see something, know something, say something. Call the police or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000."

Senior Sergeant Shane

Keogh of Warrnambool police said in light of suspicious fires in the region, it was important that tourists and locals reported anything that seemed suspicious to Crime Stoppers or to triple-zero.

"If you see any suspicious activity whatsoever make a note of the registration and call triple-zero," Senior Sergeant Keogh said.

"We've got a zero tolerance for people who start a fire, whether it was recklessly or deliberately."

Penalties for lighting fires have dramatically increased in recent years with the offence of lighting a fire during

a day of total fire ban now attracting a maximum penalty of \$33,801.60 or 12-months' imprisonment or both, up from \$14,804 or 12-months' imprisonment or both. Intentionally or recklessly causing a bushfire can now attract a maximum sentence of 15 years.

Warrnambool City Council municipal fire prevention officer Peter McArdle believes that prevention is the key to averting fires around the city, citing the council's recent blitz in which almost 400 notices were sent out to owners of overgrown blocks that pose potential fire hazards.

# Agencies caution on campfires

REGION  
By MATTHEW O'TOOLE

A WARNING about the use of campfires has been released by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) after 50 bushfires were started in Victoria by unattended campfires during the holiday period.

With hot and dry conditions

across the state resulting in a total fire ban yesterday, DSE agency commander David Nugent wanted to remind campers that on days of total fire ban no campfires or fires in the open air can be lit and anyone caught lighting one faces serious penalties and charges.

"The weather today is hot and windy and combined with dry grass and bushland, an unattended campfire can very

quickly turn into a bushfire," Mr Nugent said yesterday.

"Even last Friday when there was a total fire ban, DSE officers patrolling state forests in Gippsland had to extinguish more than 20 campfires," Mr Nugent said.

Around 10 per cent of fires in Victoria's parks and forests come from unattended campfires, leading the authorities to remind campers to ensure that their campfire is always

attended and completely extinguished when done.

The CFA and DSE also suggest that people avoid driving vehicles through grass and other growth and using other machinery with combustion engines near crops, grass or other vegetation.

For information on burns and general fire safety advice, contact the Victorian Bushfire Information line on 1800 240 667.

# More extreme heat on the way: experts

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That number is a dramatic drop from the more than 750 who were deployed to battle the fire in a 24-hour operation earlier in the week.

The huge operation prevented any homes from being lost.

Most of the area burnt has been native vegetation in rough terrain in the Lower Glenelg National Park but the damage toll has included 1200 hectares of pine plantation and blue gum plantation.

Mr Clugston said many Country Fire Authority volunteers returned to their home brigades throughout Victoria yesterday to be ready if there was a fire in their areas.

"There has been a big effort from a lot of volunteers which is greatly appreciated," Mr Clugston said.

He said a total of about 80 personnel remained in the area yesterday to keep the fire contained and firefighters were likely to continue mopping up for another week.

"We are still consolidating those containment lines."

Aircraft also flew over the fire area yesterday to spot any outbreaks.

Mr Clugston said the next significant fire day was likely to be Tuesday when

temperatures and winds were forecast to increase.

He said an information officer would be at the Dartmoor General Store from 11am-1pm today to provide up-to-date information to the public about the fire.

Warrnambool City Council senior environmental health officer Mark Handby said residents should take appropriate precautions with the increasing presence of smoke across the region.

"Bushfire smoke can reduce air quality and may affect people's health," Mr Handby said.

"Children, the elderly and people with pre-existing illnesses such as heart or lung conditions including asthma are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke

"We recommend avoiding physical activity outdoors, keeping away from the smoke, switching airconditioners to recirculate and those with asthma should follow their asthma plan."

Mr Handby said if anybody was experiencing smoke related symptoms they should seek medical advice.

For further information contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240 667 or www.cfa.vic.gov.au or ehimmelreich@fairfaxmedia.com.au



Warrnambool shrouded in smoke. 130111DW06 Picture: DAMIAN WHITE

# Hay bales smoulder

CARAMUT  
By MATT NEAL

A HAYSTACK fire at Caramut was quickly controlled yesterday morning.

A pile containing about 200 bales was seen smouldering around 8.15am and three units scrambled to the scene.

CFA district five duty officer Steve Cooper said the quick response prevented a potential disaster.

"(Haystack fires) can be a worry, especially if they're close to a house," Mr Cooper said.

"A haystack fire in a grassy paddock can start a blaze. If the wind had been up it could have caused a bit of concern.

"It was under control almost immediately. Flames couldn't be seen. It was just smouldering."

The large square bales were pulled apart by firefighters, who monitored the situation until about 11am, when they deemed it safe.

"I'm not sure how many bales have been damaged," Mr Cooper said. "It was a sizeable stack so it could be worth quite a bit of money"

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