



Australian Institute of Architects

Friday 27 March 2009

Message from the Victorian Chapter President, Karl Fender

I trust my weekly messages are of value in keeping you informed of the Victorian Chapter's contribution to the bushfire support effort. We believe it is important to work through the lead agencies, the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority and the Building Commission.

The Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority was created to provide a central point of contact for all recovery and reconstruction information and details of the work of the Authority is available on the website – www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au. The Authority is taking the lead role in the largest rebuilding and recovery program Victoria has ever faced.

As the Victorian Chapter President, I have been invited to be a member of the Bushfire Reconstruction Advisory Board, which is chaired by Max Beck of the Beck Corporation. The Board will support the Authority's work in coordinating the rebuilding of the bushfire affected communities.

Elizabeth Raut, Victorian State Manager is contributing to an Expert Reference Group and attended the first meeting on Tuesday 17 March. The Group will work with the Authority to address specific issues concerning the recovery and reconstruction process.

The Building Commission website - www.buildingcommission.com.au is also a source of bushfire information and latest news. The Commission is producing a series of publications including:

- A guide to a safe return to your property;
- A guide to building in Victoria after the bushfires;
- Temporary homes and buildings in bushfire affected areas; and
- A guide to assessing your property's Bushfire Attack Level (BAL).

It is also producing a 'Bushfire Bulletin', with the first being a Special Edition dated March 2009.

The Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) responds to the community desire to determine the potential level of bushfire risk for their home. It explains how to access a property's BAL under the new residential building standard using an easy six step approach. The guide is being distributed to Municipal Building Surveyors, Registered Building Practitioners (including architects) and consumers.

Tim Whitefield, Victorian Chapter Council member, attended a Building Commission forum on Friday 20 March, which gave attention to the preparation of Government policy guidelines applying to Government funded buildings in bushfire prone areas. This forum assisted in determining a way forward in the preparation of the guidelines and is likely to be reconvened to review progress.

The Building Commission is also conducting a series of free public seminars that inform on the new residential building standard that now applies across the state. The building industry (architects, builders, building surveyors, designers and inspectors) will gain an understanding of the key elements of the new building standard AS 3959-2009, with full day sessions being offered Victoria wide. I encourage members to attend these seminars and be updated on this new building standard.

We are still working with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect and now Archicentre, to offer a Bushfire Homes Service to families who lost their home in the bushfires. It is planned for the service to commence in April and operational details will be shared with members and others next week.

Again, I thank you for your patience in waiting for opportunities to contribute your knowledge, skills and expertise and we anticipate this new avenue will be available next week.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl Fender', followed by a long, wavy horizontal line that extends to the right.

Karl Fender, FRAIA
Victorian Chapter President